1689 The Naked Gospel. By Arthur Bury D.D. 5

TO THE READER.

THAT I may not incurr the Blame of thoſe who Publiſh Books, and afterwards ſo alter or enlarge them, as to make the Readers Loſers by the Purchaſe they had made of the Firſt Edition, as well as for a more weighty Reaſon, which is too well known to need my mentioning; I think fit to give an Account of what is ſaid in the *Title Page*, *viz.* That this Book *is now firſt publiſhed by me.*

It is well known, that the Seven Famous Biſhops, who ſtood in the *Gap* when Popery and Abſolute Power were breaking in upon us, under pretence of Indulgence to Tender Conſciences againſt Law, declared at the ſame time their Readineſs to Conſent to *ſuch* Laws, as to *that* End ſhould be regularly made: And herein they were generally applauded. And ſince *Our now Gracious King* made it one of his *firſt* Cares to invite and warrant a *Convocation*, to make ſuch Changes in our *Liturgy*, and

other Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitutions, as to them ſhould ſeem requiſite for the aforeſaid purpoſe; I had not the Patience to be ſilent at *ſuch* a time, nor yet the Saucineſs, by any *point-blank* Addreſs, to direct that Venerable Body in what they had to do. But I conceived that a Rational Account of the Deſign of the Goſpel, and of the Duty of Faith, as it might, for its *own ſake*, find a Welcome with *Divines*, ſo might it withal enlarge ſome of their Minds to a more Comprehenſive Charity than many have attained to. And ſince a Mind once *duly* enlarged, is *ſo* on all ſides; and we allow Liberty with the *ſame* Charity or Rigour in Matters of *Worſhip*, wherewith we do it in Matters of *Faith*; weighing at the *ſame Beam* a Rite in the *one*, and a Doctrine in the *other*, I was not without hope, that a Diſcourſe of *this nature* might do ſome Service, in the great Affair which the Convocation was to meet about.

But, as I intended to Communicate what I wrote, only to the Members of that Convocation, ſo I penned it with leſs Caution than was neceſſary for what was to be expoſed to every Vulgar Eye. I conceived, that Learned Perſons ſhould not need to be told, How great a Difference there is between *Aſſerting a Truth*, and *Impoſing it as an Article of Faith*: Or between *Denying the Belief of a Doctrine to be of Abſolute Neceſſity to Salvation*, and *Denying or Queſtioning the Truth thereof*. But I ſoon found my ſelf miſtaken. And I likewiſe found that too many *others* were in the Temper of the *major* part of the Lower Houſe of Convocation; who inſtead of concurring with the *Biſhops*, in a charitable and dutiful Forwardneſs to comply with *His Majeſty* in his Deſign of Calling them together, did neceſſitate him to diſable them for doing any thing at all.

Upon

Upon this Diſappointment this *Treatiſe* had been quite *ſuppreſt*, had I not communicated *four* or *five* Copies to ſo many particular Friends, preſuming they would have gone no farther: But though I kept my ſelf Maſter of all the *reſt*, it was, unknown to me, new-Printed and Publiſhed. So it got the Honour, which giveth Price to whatſoever Books it is beſtowed upon; and what *my ſelf* have gotten by it, I think not fit here to boaſt.

Though there hath been *already* enough done by *another Pen*, to purge it from its pretended Crimes of *Socinianiſm* and *worſe*, yet that Charity which alone at *firſt* moved me to write it, doth *now* induce me to comply with thoſe, who took offence at ſome Clauſes, and miſtook my whole Meaning. For *their* ſakes thoſe Offenſive Clauſes are either *left out*, or ſo *altered*, as to be made to ſpeak my Sence more clearly; and the Doctrines of the *Holy* TRINITY and INCARNATION are inſerted; which I was ſuſpected to disbelieve, becauſe I did not *expreſly* declare my Opinion concerning them: Which I could not think one in *my* Circumſtances needed to have done. And in *this Review* I have moreover a little ſhortened ſome Chapters, by ſtriking out here and there a Paragraph which came in but by the *Bye*, and I thought might be well ſpared.

But as for that which ſome are moſt offended with, I cannot therein ſubmit to the leaſt Compliance; I mean theſe Words in the Concluſion.

This is the ſingular Honour of the Reformers of our Church; This makes it the beſt Conſtituted Church in the World, that in her Departure from the Corruptions of Rome,

She departed not from Charity: *That She imitated the great* Apoſtle's *Conduct, becoming a* Papiſt *to the* Papiſts, *that by all means She might gain ſome of the* Papiſts. *For this good reaſon, She kept the* Beſt Collects *in the* Roman Liturgy, *all that was juſtifiable in their* Litany, *and all their* Creeds: *In their* Rubricks, *many of their* Feaſts, *moſt of their* Faſts, *and ſome of their* Ceremonies: *And the Succeſs juſtified this Conduct, till a Bull from* Rome *blaſted the Fruit, which ſuch fair Bloſſoms promiſed. But ſince that time, as She hath gotten none from* Rome, *ſo hath She on the other ſide loſt many of her own, whoſe narrower Souls could not ſwallow ſuch things, as were in no other relation valuable, but what they carried to ſo good an end. And now more than an* Hundred *Years Experience calleth upon the ſame Charity, to tack about and ſteer a contrary Courſe.*

It is a general Rule, and practis'd by all good Phyſicians, to obſerve whether their Preſcriptions do more Good or Hurt; neither would he *be faithful either to his Patient or his Profeſſion, that ſhould obſtinately ſtick to his firſt Orders, in contradiction to Experience. It hath pleaſed our Gracious King to Invite and Authoriſe the Prelates and Repreſentatives of our Church, to practiſe the ſame Charity towards our diſtemper'd Church and State: And it will be a great diſappointment both to His Majeſty and his good People, if ſo glorious an Opportunity prove fruitleſs: Nor will thoſe who glory in the Character of* Church-of-England-men *make good their claim to it, if they really diſhonour the Church, by renouncing her Spirit of Charity; ſuppoſing to Honour her by their ſtiffneſs to* thoſe *Conſtitutions, whoſe very Authors (were they now living and true to their own Reaſons) muſt be willing to Aboliſh.*

If *this* were the Damnable Hereſie which raiſed ſuch Storms, I muſt ſtand them as I may; for I am ſo far from

from Renouncing it, that I think nothing can be more Seaſonable than to Publiſh it, together with the Treatiſe which it cloſed. For tho' that bright Day be *paſt*, which gave us ſuch hopes of Uniting the more Sober Diſſenters to the Church, yet thoſe *black Clouds* which now Threaten us, do give us a new and ſtronger Motive, to conſider the things which belong to our Peace. We hear not only of Mutinous Talk, but of down-right Conſpiracies; which ſhew many of the *ſame* men who were lately ſo very ſick of King *James*, to be no *leſs* ſick of King *William*: Yea, and that *ſome* of them Wiſh for the Cruel *French* to deliver them from his Government. *what* can be the Cauſe of ſo Great, ſo Sudden a Change? *whoſe* Property hath He Invaded? *whoſe* Liberty hath He Reſtrained? *whom* hath He in any kind Provoked? Yea, What hath He not done that He might Oblige us? To *what* Toyls, to *what* Dangers, hath He expoſed His Perſon; and what Reſt hath He given His Mind, ever ſince He firſt Engaged Himſelf, His Life and Fortunes, for our Deliverance? I know no other way to Unriddle ſo ſtrange a Phœnomenon, in reference to the Perſons I am ſpeaking of, but His ſhewing ſuch Forwardneſs to Indulge Diſſenters; and their Jealouſy that he may hereafter Effect that Deſign, in a way different from that moſt *regular* one, in which he found ſo great Diſcouragement: And their moſt unreaſonable Jealouſy too, in ſpight of all His Majeſties moſt Gracious Aſſurances to the contrary, that He deſigns to make *this* Church not unlike to *that*, in which *Himſelf* was Educated. Whereupon they think, That ſuch a *Proteſtant* Church

as

as *ours*, may be Safer under a *Popiſh* King, than under *ſuch* a *Proteſtant* King, as they will have His preſent Majeſty to be. Againſt ſuch Thoughts, and *thoſe* who will have them the Cognizance of *true Church of England men*, I will only Oppoſe thoſe Words of the Arch-Biſhop of *Tuam*, which I find in his Excellent Sermon, a while ſince Preached in *London*, to the Proteſtants of *Ireland*. *Affliction*, ſaith he, *maketh us ſet a greater Value on Charity, and Eſteem it* a more Excellent way *than Parts or Gifts, or Notional or meer Ritual Religion. It lets men ſee the Folly and Miſchief of Contending about Opinions, that may be or may not be aſſented to, without prejudice to the Faith; or about things, that may be or may not be done, without prejudice to the Unity of the Church.* Then, exhorting *both* ſides to meet in that Temper, which may heal the *Schiſm*, he *thus* proceeds: *This is a Duty which our late common Danger ſadly convinced moſt men to be very neceſſary.*—— *And ſince we owe our diſpoſition to Peace, to our Affliction, let us have a care, if we ſo ſoon forget the Leſſon we had almoſt learned, that we provoke not God's Judgments, to teach it us again by the ſame Diſcipline; and let all men ſee to our ſhame, that* Proteſtants *will be no longer quiet, than the* Rod *is on their Backs.*

Which of the *two* are the *truer Church of England men*, Thoſe who dread the Return of King *James* with his *Jeſuites*, or Thoſe who Wiſh and Labour for it: Thoſe who are ſo *Stiff*, as rather to Hazard the *whole*, than to Part with the leaſt *Circumſtance*; (*i. e.*) Thoſe who

who are both Dutiful to their Governours, and Charitable to their Brethren; or Thoſe who are neither the *one* nor the *other*; but cover their Stiffneſs to their own Humours and Intereſts, with the Specious Pretence of Zeal for the *Church*: I ſay, *which* of theſe are the *truer Church of England men*, a *little* time muſt needs diſcover, if it be not ſufficiently known already. And *which* of theſe are the *better Chriſtians*, cannot (I need not ſay) better be diſcovered, than by the Principles of the Chriſtian Religion. Among which, ſince *that* of *Faith* is moſt abuſed, as in *other* reſpects, ſo eſpecially in *this*, that it is made the moſt Miſchievous Incendiary in the Chriſtian World; and what is ſaid of *Fire*, may be applied to *Faith*, that *'tis the beſt Servant, but the worſt Maſter*, I thought I could do no better Service, than to endeavour to have it kept within its *due* Bounds; that ſo we may have the benefit of its Service, without the Miſchief of its Dominion.

And ſince there is no better way for hunting out of Truth, than to Trace it from its *firſt* Principles; *this* way have I therefore taken, and with all Sincerity purſued. Yet not pretending to that Dictating Power which I plead againſt, I ſubmit my Reaſonings to Examination. Nor do I riſe up againſt the Authority of the *Church*, in which I acknowledge a Power to Impoſe *Silence*, tho' not *Faith*.

I am not Conſcious of having Contradicted *any* of the Churches Articles, in any one *Word*; and I implicitly Renounce any *ſuch* Word, if I *have*. It is not *every* Truth which is worthy to be ballanced againſt *Peace* which *few* are more ſerviceable than *this* Great

That *the Peace of the World is too good a thing, to be concerned in any Doctrine, as an* Article of Faith, *which the* Holy Scripture *hath not expresly declared* Necessary to Salvation; *or is not most apparently* so *in its own Nature.*

THE

CHAP. I.

Principles of Natural Religion, Fundamentals of the Chriſtian.

Τί ἐστι τὸ παιδεύειν; μανθάνειν τὰς φυσικὰς προλήψεις ἐφαρμόζειν ἑκάστοις ἰδίαις κατὰλληλως τῇ φύσει. *What is Learning or Inſtruction, but application of Generals to Particulars, in a natural way?* ſaith *Arrian* upon *Epictetus*; laying it as a Fundamental Rule whereon we muſt build, and whereby we muſt regulate, all our Opinions in point of Manners. And it will as well hold in all other Arts and Sciences: *Euclid* buildeth all his Geometry upon ſuch principles as he calleth στοιχεῖα, becauſe by that A.B.C. he ſpelleth out all his demonſtrations of Propoſitions and Solutions of Problems. And by the ſame Rule muſt we proceed in the Judgment we are to make of the Religion we profeſs; wherein that we may build ſecurely, we muſt conſult no other but the ſacred Oracles, which give us both *Character* and *Account* of the Goſpel; By the Former we underſtand the *Nature and General Deſign of the whole*; by the Later we may judge of any *particular Doctrine* that may claim our Belief.

The *Character*, whereby we are to judge of the *Nature and General Deſign* of the Goſpel, is ſometimes that of a *Covenant*, oftner that of a *Meſſage*.

1. Sometimes it is ſet forth as a *New Covenant*, either to ſecure us of the Performance on God's part; becauſe if he ſhould violate it, he muſt break not only a Promiſe given, but

a Covenant eſtabliſhed; or elſe in oppoſition to a *Former Covenant*, which it is to ſucceed: Under this Character we find it propheſied of, *Jer.* 31. 33. which Prophecy is Applied *Heb.* 8. 8. *Behold, the days come (ſaith the Lord) when I will make a New Covenant with the houſe of* Iſrael *and the houſe of* Judah; *Not according to the Covenant which I made with their Fathers in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the Land of* Egypt; *becauſe they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not, ſaith the Lord. For this is the Covenant*, &c. and more ſuccinctly, *ch.* 10. *v.* 17. *This is the Covenant that I will make with them, after thoſe days ſaith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their ſins and iniquities will I remember no more.* This that we may the more ſenſibly apprehend, we muſt conſider what was the *Old Covenant*, which this *New One* muſt aboliſh.

THIS that we may rightly underſtand, we *need* not, *ought* not to look further than the very Words, which plainly tell us, it was no *Elder* nor *Other*, than That which God made with the *Iſraelites*, *when he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of* Egypt; when they had a Miraculous Deliverance out of that *houſe of Bondage*, and conſtant Tokens of his Preſence during *forty years in the Wilderneſs*: Eſpecially That day when he promulgated That body of Laws which was to *Diſtinguiſh* them from all other Nations, and *Preſerve* them from the Idolatry wherewith the Univerſe had corrupted themſelves.

For whether it be, that Guilt and Luſt conſpire to flatter God with Ceremonies, in compenſation for defect of Obedience; or that, judging of God by the Princes of the World, we be apt to believe him pleaſed with ſuch Bodily poſtures as may ſignify awe of the Mind; or that fondneſs to our bodies tempt us to give them preference in our Devotions as well as in our Pleaſures: Whatever the reaſon be, plain it is, that Ceremoniouſneſs moſt frequently haunteth Devotion, ſo that no Nation ever enter-

entertained the one without the other: And as *Superſtition* is nothing elſe but exceſs of *Ceremonioufneſs*, ſo is *Idolatry* nothing elſe but exceſs of *Superſtition*.

To divert this humor till it might be cured, God exerciſed his Choſen People with ſuch Laws, as might not only Satisfy, but Surfeit their appetite of Ceremonies, and moſt of them direct prohibitions of ſuch Rites as were practiſed by their neighbour Idolaters; Thoſe Laws God calleth his *Covenant*, and the *Jews* their *Inheritance*.

But this Medicine, as it was Wholeſom, ſo it was Bitter; God himſelf ſaith, that he *gave them Laws which were not good*, and his Apoſtle juſtifieth them no otherwiſe than as a Diſcipline, unworthy of Heirs, yet neceſſary for Non-age. They were troubleſome in their Matter, coſtly in their Expence, dark in their Meaning, grievous in their Multitude, and in all reſpects ſuch as needed the comforts which by his Prophets God ſent them; promiſing a freer and happier diſpenſation, when time ſhould ripen them to a capacity for it.

And when the appointed Time was fulfilled, *then* was the now Recited Prophecy fulfilled alſo: Which deſcribeth the Covenant 1. *Negatively*, *not like the Former*, whoſe Laws where no leſs hard to be underſtood, than to be performed. 2. *Poſitively* ſuch as their own hearts, without need of any other Inſtructer, might Teach them? What thoſe Laws are the Apoſtle moſt plainly declareth, *Rom* 2. 14. *&c.* So the Prophecy, as Applied by the *Epiſt.* to the *Heb.* and deſcribed by the *Epiſt.* to the *Rom.* Demonſtrateth that the Goſpel is a *New Covenant* in oppoſition to the *Old* one Stabliſhed by *Moſes*, and *Better* than it in two Reſpects: 1. It bringeth us from Obſcure, and Burthenſome Ceremonies, to the plain and pleaſant Law of Nature: and 2*dly*, It promiſeth Pardon upon Repentance, when we have broken that Law. And in both theſe Reſpects, as it is a better *Covenant*, ſo doth it deſerve a better *Character*: And therefore,

2. More frequently 'tis ſet forth as a *GOOD MESSAGE*. This the word GOSPEL literally importeth, and under This Title we

we find it moſt pompouſly proclaimed by St. *John*, in his entry upon his firſt Epiſtle; wherein having ſtudiouſly recommended it to our belief by its Certainty, and to our appetites by its Happineſs, he proceedeth to publiſh its deſign to be no other than the performance of the Promiſe *viz.* The advancement of Primitive, Natural Religion, and that to a higher perfection: *Theſe things we write to you that you may have fellowſhip* &c. Former ages knew only the Father; but *our fellowſhip is with the Father and with his Son.* As therefore in the face of Jeſus Chriſt we ſee more of the Father's goodneſs, ſo are we thereby obliged to higher ſtrains of love to him and one another: And whereas the word κοινωνία ſignifieth not only *Fellowſhip*, but *Partnerſhip*, and Natural Religion taught Philoſophers that the beſt worſhip of God is to be *like* him; the Apoſtle telleth us, that to this end *are given us precious promiſes, that by them we may be partakers of the Divine Nature.*

The ſame in a gayer dreſs we have in the next verſe; *Theſe things we write unto you that your joy may be full. Natural Religion* taught men to worſhip God with Feaſts: And by this Argument principally doth *Plutarch* prove the joys of the Religious to be greater than thoſe of the Epicurean; becauſe the one taſteth nothing but the Wine and Viands, but the other *rejoyceth in God, then and there eſpecially Preſent and Propitious.* And by this Argument muſt the *Joy* of a Chriſtian be greater than that of a Philoſopher; becauſe the One can have no other aſſurance of God's Propitiouſneſs, but what he can borrow from his Reaſon; whereas the other hath it by Revelation: For in the *new Covenant* above-recited, is a promiſe of mercy in forgiveneſs of ſins; and in the Goſpel this is ſo plainly expreſſed, that our St. *John* maketh it a point of Faithfulneſs in God to perform it. And whereas Death is the wages of ſin, Eternal life muſt be the conſequent of its Pardon, which alſo in the Goſpel is expreſly promiſed; ſo what the wiſeſt Philoſophers ſtrongly Wiſhed and faintly Hoped, the Chriſtian is Secure of, and thereby his *joy is Full* in that part where theirs was Thirſty, *viz.* Aſſurance of Immortality.

Having

Having thus endeared and publiſhed the gracious *Deſign* of his Meſſage, he proceedeth to deliver it's joyful *Matter: This is the meſſage which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all.* A glorious, but a dazeling Word! whereby yet we diſcover ſome Principles whereon we muſt build our Religion, and whereby we muſt meaſure every Doctrine that ſhall be offered to our Belief.

1. *It is the Fundamental Principle of the Goſpel (as alſo it is of Natural Religion) that we think the beſt of God.*

Without this, as we are in danger of running into Errors worſe then Idolatry or Atheiſm, ſo are we incapable, either to hold fellowſhip with God; Or to Rejoyce in him. We cannot endeavor to be like God, unleſs we know the Original which we muſt Copy; nor can our joy be fuller than our Knowledge of what we are to rejoyce in.

2. *Since we can have no Idea of things but ſuch as we are more or leſs beholden to our ſenſes for, we muſt from the Beſt which we ſee in the Creatures, climb in our contemplations of God's Perfections.* Since therefore in the Viſible world, Light is the moſt perfect; and of the Intellectual world, we know nothing but our own Minds; by theſe two we muſt make the beſt judgment we can of God's Nature, which the former repreſenteth as a Mirror, the later as an Image

3. *Light is the beſt glaſs, to diſcover God's Perfections*; The Apoſtle therefore pointeth at the Sun as a *Mirror*, hung up by God in the Firmament, that therein we may ſee his Beauties reflected. And though St. *Paul* juſtly complains that *now we ſee him in a Glaſs darkly*; yet have we reaſon to rejoyce in ſo *bright a* one; for therein, however *Darkly, yet Competently*, we diſcover divine perfections. *God is a Spirit*, and Light filleth the air, without excluding any other gueſt. *God is Pure*, and Light is Uncapable of Receiving any Corruption. *God is True*, and Light faithfully diſcovereth what every thing is. *God is Powerful*, and Light deſtroyeth (its enemy) Darkneſs with its

its looks. *God is infinitely Amiable*, and Light is the first and original Beauty of the world. *God is Bountiful*, and Light by communicating its beams cherisheth all the world, *&c.*

If now any one ask *Jehu*'s Question: which of all these doth the message belong to? Whether we look into the following Epistle; we therein find *Love* anointed above its fellows, not only by more frequent mentions, but by a singular prerogative; for *God is Love* in the Abstract; or whether we allow St. *James* to be a good Expositor, we thus find him Paraphrase our St. *John*: *Every good gift, and perfect gift cometh from above, from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning*: (saith our English; *no parallaxes, projection of shadows, or Tropicks*, intimateth the Greek) The message then must be this.

As we see the Sun communicateth his light to the whole circumference, not to gain any thing to its self, but only to give happiness to the World; and since he can shine only upon One Hemisphere at once, he runneth about, that by turns he may bless them Both; So must we conceive of God; but without the defects. In all his dispensations he aimeth not at any gain to *himself*; but because he could no more contain his Happiness in himself, than the Sun can his Light; therefore did he Create the World, that the Exuberance might have receivers: And of this truth there are as many proofs as there are Creatures in the World: For though they be innumerable in Kinds, and there be great Diversity in Degrees of happiness, yet every one hath sufficient to fill his own capacity. Some have only Body; some have *Body and Soul*; but man hath *Body, Soul, and Spirit.*

5. *As God Communicateth his Nature to his Creatures, so doth he exercise a Fatherly care of their well being,, by giving them Laws serviceable to their own and the general good.*

Inanimate Creatures are Governed by Necessity, *so the Sun knoweth his setting, and the Moon her going down*; Animals, by Instinct; so *the Stork knoweth his appointed times*; And Man, by Reason, which is the *Image of God.* For as we are taught by

by *Moſes* that *God created Man in his own Likeneſs*; ſo are we by St *Paul*, that this *Image* is *Knowledge*, whereby we diſcover, that which we mentioned as the Second way of knowing God. For,

6. *As we may have ſame gueſs what kind of Man any one is by his Picture; ſo we may in a great meaſure know the Will of God by our own Minds, if we keep them clean.* The Law of *Moſes* put the *Urim* and *Thummim* on the out-ſide of *Aarons* Breaſt, as a Type of the Oracle, which in every Divine Mind, will inſtruct the Enquirer how to pleaſe God.

7. *The Law which God hath given to every Creature, obligeth them to preſerve their Being, and promote their Well-being, and to the Performance thereof he hath annexed its proper Pleaſure.*

The higheſt Being of Animals is Carnal Life. When they preſerve their Lives by Food, and their Kind by Propagation, they Obey the Law, and Enjoy the Pleaſure, proper to their Nature. But Man hath a *Spirit*, and ſuitable thereto, *a Spiritual Law, and Spiritual Pleaſures*. The Law obligeth us to hold *Communion with God*, in a Divine Life, and the Pleaſure annexed, is *Fulneſs of Joy*; and theſe Two we have heard St. *John* proclaim to be the Deſign of the Goſpel, as we now find them contained in that Idea of God, which he declared to be the Sum of his Meſſage; which abrogateth the Law of *Moſes*, as in a Picture, the laſt lively Colours blot out the rude ones that prepared the Work, but confirmeth the Law of Nature, as a Building doth the Foundation whereon it is raiſed. For whatever Philoſophy could preach in the Behalf of Vertue, the Goſpel advanceth with Nobler Precepts, richer Promiſes, more charming Allurements, and ſecurer Peace, *&c*, and upon ſuch potent Motives, requireth a Piety proportionably exalted above what the Heathen pretended to, *that we may be Perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is Perfect*.

If This be the *Deſign*, This the *Matter* of the Goſpel, then have we an Authentick Teſt, whereby to try any Doctrine that may claim our Belief, as a Goſpel-Truth. If to theſe we

find it *Serviceable*, we muſt *Embrace* it; if *Impertinent*, we muſt *Slight* it; if *Pernicious*, we muſt *Reject* it. And by This Rule, as we ſafely may, we ſhall make our Enquiries.

CHAP. II.

Enquiry the Firſt; *What was the Goſpel which our Lord, and his Apoſtles Preached?* And Firſt of *Faith.*

THis Enquiry cannot employ Logick, Metaphiſicks, or any other Scholaſtick Arts; cannot require Subtlety of Judgment, or Cunning in Diſpute, yea, or much Labour; We need not tumble many or Large Volumes; no, nor ſo much as one Syſtem. It is not Matter of Study, but of Record; nor needs it any other Anſwer, than that which our Lord gave to him, that demanded, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?* We muſt for our Satisfaction Conſult the Scriptures, *What is written in the Goſpel, How readeſt thou?*

The N. T. which we receive as the Rule and Meaſure of our Faith, revealeth to us but Two general Doctrines at the moſt, as preached by our Lord. St. *Mark* ſaith, Jeſus *came into* Galilee, *preaching the Goſpel of the Kingdom of God, and ſaying, The Time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, REPENT ye, and BELIEVE the Goſpel.* If it be not hereby ſufficiently plain, That the whole is compriſed in *Repentance and Faith*, St. *Paul* putteth it out of doubt: For in his farewel Diſcourſe, with the Elders of the Church of *Epheſus*, he thus juſtifieth himſelf, *Act.* 20. 20, 21. *I have kept back nothing from you that was profitable to you, but have ſhewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from houſe to houſe, Teſtifying both to the* Jews, *and alſo to the* Greeks, *Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* What can be more plain or ſolemn? He ſends for the Elders of the great City to *Miletus*,

letus, he ſaith, That both publickly and privately, to both ſorts of Diſciples, *Jews* and *Greeks*, he had been ſo faithful as to ſhew them whatever concerned them, not only as *Neceſſary*, but as *Profitable*; and this he proveth by inſtancing in the particulars, *Repentance* and *Faith*; which if they did not contain all that was *Profitable*, could not make good his Juſtification of himſelf as faithful in his Preaching. Whoever therefore requireth any larger *Catalogue of Fundamentals*, or Profitable Doctrines, muſt impeach this Great Apoſtle, as groſſely Ignorant or Unfaithful.

Yea, The Holy Scripture in other places, is ſo far from enlarging the Catalogue, that it reduceth theſe Two to One.

For the ſame Sermon of our Lord, which we now found St. *Mark* ſo to repeat, as to mention both *Repentance* and *Faith*, we find St. *Matthew* ſo to repeat, as to make Repentance alone, not only his *Firſt*, but his *Conſtant* Subject. *Matth.* 4. 17. *From that time* Jeſus *began to preach, and to ſay, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; And as he Began, ſo he Ended: For at his Departure into Heaven, he ſaid to his Apoſtles, and thoſe that were with them; *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the Dead the Third Day, and that Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins, ſhould be preached in his Name.*

But elſewhere he alloweth Faith the ſelf ſame Dignity, making it the Adæquate End of his coming into the World, and the Adæquate Condition, upon which he will grant eternal Life: For in his Diſcourſe with *Nicodemus*, *John* 3. 16. he declareth that *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever* BELIEVETH *in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* And St. *Joh.* 20. 31. ſaith, *Theſe things are written, that ye might* BELIEVE *that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and that* BELIEVING, *ye might have* LIFE *through his Name.* So far is our Lord from thinking a large Catalogue of Fundamentals to be an Honor to his Goſpel, that he thinketh the leaſt of Numbers, not too ſmall.

That he may not ſeem to contradict himſelf by thus varying from One to Two, and from the One to the Other; we muſt

 conſider,

conſider, That either of them in their comprehenſive Sence, containeth the other. For he that hath ſuch a Belief of the Promiſe of Pardon upon Repentance, as is required in the Goſpel, will certainly add *Repentance* to his Faith. And again, He that therefore Repenteth, becauſe he believeth Chriſt's Promiſe, buildeth his Repentance upon his Faith. The one, is the Fruit of the other.

Becauſe therefore they are to be diſtinguiſhed, tho' not to be ſeparated, we ſhall handle them as the *Two Tables of the New Covenant*, ſo Joined, as to be Several. When diſplayed, they appear Two, and that which is next the Eye, denominateth the whole; ſometime *Faith*, ſometime *Repentance*.

WE begin with *Faith* upon Two contrary Accounts. 1. Becauſe it is ſo *Unhappy*, as by the ſubtilty of Doctors to be made the Incendiary of publick Wars and Diſſentions, and the Tormenter of private Conſciences. And, 2. Becauſe it is ſo *Happy* as to be Honoured by our Lord and his Apoſtles, with the Promiſe of *Eternal Life*. For as St. *Paul* declareth, that we are *juſtified by Faith*; ſo our Lord told *Nicodemus*, *God ſo loved the World, that he ſent his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

What can be fuller or clearer? The Benefit is proclaimed under a double Character, to double its certainty, Negative, *ſhall not periſh*; and Poſitive, *ſhall have everlaſting Life:* The Promiſe is Univerſal, to *whomſoever believeth*; and Free from all other Conditions, but Believing. And now, What need of the Impertinent Trouble of Repentance? Why ſhould we run the ſmarting Gandelope of Mortification, croſſing our Appetites, and afflicting our Souls?

Thus do ſome daſh the two Tables of the New Covenant againſt each other, and make the Goſpel an Enemy to its own great Deſign, which we have found to be the Advancement of Vertue and true Piety.

The firſt Service therefore that we can reaſonably do to Faith, muſt be to reſcue it from ſo great a Miſchief, by reconciling

conciling our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of *Eternal Life to whomſoever believeth*, with his no leſs abſolute Threat, that *except we repent, we ſhall all periſh.* And this will eaſily be done by theſe two Propoſitions.

1. *All Promiſes, however abſolute in words, muſt be underſtood with implication of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

2. *In our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of Eternal Life to all believers, Repentance is neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

1. *All Promiſes include a tacit ſuppoſal of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* It is Impoſſible, at leaſt very Troubleſome, and equally Needleſs, that whoever maketh a Promiſe, ſhould explicitly reckon up all ſuch Conditions, as by their own Light are Viſible, and therefore Need not; and by their multitude Innumerable, and therefore Cannot, be particularly Expreſſed: Reaſon therefore, and Neceſſity, and the Joint-Practice of all Mankind, have concurred in the Rule, that whatever is neceſſary in its own Nature to be ſuppoſed, is to be taken as neceſſarily Implied; and accordingly, in every Promiſe are tacitly implied ſuch plain, tho' unmentioned, Reſervations.

2. *Repentance and Holineſs of Life, are neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* This appeareth both from the Nature of the thing, and the expreſs Declarations of the Author of the Promiſe.

From the *Nature of the thing*. The Law of Nature is Written in the Heart, by the Hand of God, as a Tranſcript of his own Nature, and muſt be like its Original, Immortal. The Goſpel came not to Deface it, but to make it more Legible; to New Write it upon our Underſtandings, with clearer Gloſſes; upon our Reaſon, with brighter Arguments; upon our Affections, with nobler Motives; upon our Hopes, with higher Encouragements; and upon our Beliefs, with plainer Promiſes. And ſhould our Lord, upon any Account whatſoever, promiſe impunity to ſin, this would turn him from a *Saviour* to a *Tempter*. *You ſhall not die*, was the voice of the Serpent; and while the Sons of *Eve* have the ſame licoriſhneſs after forbidden Pleaſures, the ſame promiſe (if believed) muſt have the ſame Succeſs. To promiſe

miſe impunity in a pleaſant evil, is to invite to its enjoyment. Far be this from our Lord, Who was ſo careful to preſerve us from ſo great a Danger, that he did not leave us to the general Nature of all Promiſes, but clearly and frequently warned us againſt ſuch a miſtake. He openly declared, That ſome would not only plead their Faith, but its Fruits. *Preaching in his Name, caſting out Devils*, and *doing many wonderful Works*, are plain Evidences of Believing; yet even to ſuch, he will ſay, *Depart from me, I know you not*, when he knows them too well to own them, becauſe *workers of Iniquity*.

And that Repentance may not complain as leſs honoured, he preferreth it to the ſame Dignity: For in his laſt Sermon to his Apoſtles, he ſaith no leſs for *it*, than he had done for Faith: *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again*, and that *Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins, ſhould be Preached in his Name*; but to what purpoſe ſhould Repentance be Preached in *his* Name, if he hath promiſed Everlaſting Life without it?

That we may be the more ſecure of a Rule ſo Important, let us ſee how it's Confirmed by an Example ſo appoſite, that it looketh as like an Illuſtration framed on purpoſe, as a true Hiſtory. *Act.* 27. 18.

We were in the ſame danger of Eternal Death, as St. *Paul* and his Company were of Temporal; and our Deliverance is no leſs like, than was the Danger. *Paul* promiſeth, *There ſhall not be loſs of any man's Life*; yet when the Mariners would have ſtolen away, he ſaid to the Centurion, *Except theſe abide in the Ship, we cannot be ſaved.*

What now can the *Antinomian* Plead, which this Example doth not Anſwer? What difficulty is there in the Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith, which it doth not clear? Did Chriſt abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *whoſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh?* So did his Apoſtle abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *no man's Life ſhould be loſt:* Is Juſtification freely promiſed for *Chriſt's ſake?* So was Deliverance freely promiſed for *Paul's ſake.* Did God ſend his *Son* to publiſh this Promiſe?

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So did he ſend his *Angel* to St. *Paul.* Are our beſt Works inſufficient to Juſtifie us? So was the beſt Skill of the Mariners to Deliver the Voyagers. Yet unleſs the Mariners abide in the Ship, none of the Company can eſcape; and unleſs Holineſs abide in our Lives, we muſt periſh. If therefore any, under pretence of caſting Anchor upon Chriſt's Promiſe, ſteal away from Repentance, we muſt have recourſe to our *Rule*, as St. *Paul* had to the *Centurion*; and the neceſſity of Holineſs will perform the ſame Office, as the Souldiers did, cut aſunder their pretences, and let their hopes fall off.

In this Rule, there is nothing doubtful but *this*, Whether it be more Obvious, or Neglected, or Important?

'Tis So *Important*, That it will clear all the difficulties which ſwell ſo many Volums, with Queſtions concerning *Juſtification*, and the *Covenant of Grace*. *Papiſts* will not be able to Quarrel with us, when we ſay with St. *Paul*, *By Faith we are juſtified*; nor will the *Antinomians* be able to accuſe us as Enemies of *Free Grace*, when we ſay with St. *James*, *We are juſtified by Works.*

It is ſo *Obvious* and ſimple, that it will eaſily avoid the impertinent Niceties of Diſputers, whether it be an Aſſent, or Reliance, or Recumbency? Whether it juſtify as an Inſtrument, or a Condition? By the Act, or the Habit? Before Sanctification, or After it? *&c.* We no ſooner Reconcile St. *Paul* with himſelf, his Abſolute Promiſe of Deliverance with his Proteſtation, that without the Mariners ſtay they muſt Periſh; but we thence Learn how to Reconcile him with St. *James*; Free Grace, with Conditions required; the Inſufficiency of good Works, with their Neceſſity; Juſtification by Works, upon account of Natural Religion; with Juſtification by Faith, upon account of the Goſpel.

Yet it is ſo *Neglected*, that in thoſe many Treatiſes that have been publiſhed, concerning the *New Covenant* and *Juſtification*, it is *rarely* Honoured with ſo much as a mention.

Yea, it is worthy our Conſideration upon another Account; it may ſilence, not only the *Antinomian*, in his Oppoſition to good

good Works, but the *Gnoſtick* too, in his Humor of Diſputing. For pray Conſider; Would it not have been wondrous Wiſely done, if in time of ſuch danger, and upon ſuch warning, the Souldiers, in ſtead of haſtening to ſecure the Mariners, and their own lives, ſhould have trifled away their Precious time in Diſputing, to which of the two they muſt owe their lives? To the Apoſtle, becauſe God had given them to him; Or to the Mariners, becauſe he had declared they could not eſcape without them? For God's ſake, let us haſten to put our Souls out of Danger; When that is done, and we are ſafe at Land, if we can there find no better Employment, nor greater Pleaſure, than to play at *Croſs-Purpoſes* we may think how to Oppoſe, and then to Reconcile St. *Paul* and St. *James*.

The Caſe (you may ſay) is very unlike: St. *Paul* was a Choſen Veſſel, and a Stout Champion for the Goſpel; He was *not behind the very Chiefeſt of the Apoſtles, but laboured* and ſuffered *more than they all.* This very Voyage was but part of a danger, which carried him to a greater for the Goſpel's ſake: And it was but juſt that his Lord, for whoſe ſake he was Engaged in the Storm, ſhould deliver him from it; and the Extent of the Favour to all his Companions, though in Juſtice it were not due, might very Congruouſly be granted in Kindneſs to ſo great a Saint, and under ſuch Circumſtances. *But what are the great Merits of Faith, which may any way Entitle it to ſo great a Reward as Everlaſting Life? Whatever can pretend to worth, muſt make its Claim good, by ſhewing how it partaketh of the Nature of God, who is the firſt Good: But to be* Credulous, *is ſo far from the Power of Divine life, that it is a plain Confeſſion of Weakneſs; it is nothing elſe but Leaning upon another, for want of knowledge of its own:* The ſimple believeth every word, but a Wiſe Man looketh well to his going, *ſaid the Wiſeſt of all mere Men. And experience telleth us, that Children and Dotards, Women and Fools, the Sick and the Ignorant, are moſt eaſie; and by how much any Man is Wiſer, by ſo much he is Warier, that he be not impoſed upon. Had Faith any worth, we ſhould have heard of it in* Moſes *or the Prophets; and the Philoſophers would have allow-*

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ed it a place among the virtues: Whereas on the Contrary, the Old Teſtament mentioneth it, but once or twice, and that not by way of Precept; but Philoſophers Liſt it among Vices. And what reward can it poſſibly deſerve? If I believe either I do it upon good Reaſon or not; If I ſee good Reaſon for my Belief, I cannot deſerve Reward becauſe no Man can Chuſe, but muſt Neceſſarily believe, as far as he ſees Reaſon: If I believe, without Reaſon, then I am a fool, and ſo far from deſerving a Reward, that I deſerve Blame. And if it ſeem hard to juſtify our Lord's Wiſdom, in promiſing ſo great a Reward to a Performance that deſerveth none at all; it will appear no leſs ſo, to Juſtify his Goodneſs, in impoſing a Task no leſs Difficult than Worthleſs: For whereas no ſmall part of the good Tidings of the Goſpel, is our Manumiſſion from the Bondage of Moſes's *Law; the Yoke of Chriſt will ſeem the harder of the two. It is eaſier for a Rich Man to Sacrifice whole Hecatombs, when he hath wealth enough to purchaſe them, than to pull out his eyes; yet can any Man more eaſily pull out the Eye of his Body, than his Reaſon, which is not only the eye, but the heart; for it is his very Definition, without which he cannot be a Man: It is* God's Image, *and the Apoſtle Exhorteth us to* put on the New Man, which is renewed in knowledge after the Image of him that Created him. *Now that God ſhould Print his Image in our Hearts, require us to Renew it; yet promiſe Eternal Life for Reward if we Deface it; is a ſaying Harder to be Believed, than all the Ceremonies of* Moſes's *Law were to be Practiſed.*

This and more is Objected againſt Faith in General; and ſtill the more we deſcend to Particulars, whether in the Doctrines, that are impoſed as Articles of Faith; or in the diſpute between That and Good Works; the more will the Objections riſe in force and number. For every one Employeth his Care againſt the Adverſary of his Opinion, with neglect of the firſt Principles of the Goſpel; and thoſe who plead for Juſtification by Faith, have not the Gratitude to Juſtify Faith it ſelf, or its great Author; but leave him as an Arbitrary, Unreaſonable Law-giver, impoſeing Uſeleſs Worthleſs Commands, with the weightieſt Obligations, to no purpoſe at all.

We ſhall therefore endeavour, by his Grace, to perform ſo Neceſſary and too much Neglected a Work; and by the Plaineſt, Simpleſt, General Principles of Religion and Reaſon, ſo to Aſſert the Honour of our Lord and his Goſpel, as to give a fair account both of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs; proving his Goſpel to be no leſs Reaſonable than Gracious; which alſo will be a good Healer of the Breaches that are made in our minds by Doubts, or in the Church of Chriſt by Diſputes, concerning Controverted Doctrines.

For whereas it is acknowledged as a Foundation in all Sciences, that we muſt ſeek Truth by Application of Generals to Particulars; and it is the General ſcope of the Goſpel to advance *Natural Religion*; this is the Sting of the Objection, That Faith hath no place among Virtues, but Credulity hath one among Vices: That our Defence therefore may both Obviate the Objection, and build upon a good Foundation, it ſhall ſtand upon theſe two Pillars.

1. *Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, as a Cardinal Virtue.*

2. *Credulity is not Faith; but as Oppoſite to it, as Vice to Virtue.*

Both theſe Propoſitions are of Divine Authority, Recommended by the Apoſtle *Rom.* 3. 4. in theſe words, *Let God be True, but every Man a Lyar*, the former half of which words, ſhall we find Aſſert the firſt of theſe Propoſitions, and the Latter half the other; ſo that we can ſay nothing but by way of Explication, Diſplaying what is wrapt up in thoſe few Divine Syllables: And when we have thence diſcovered what Figure Faith made in Natural Religion, we ſhall have gone at leaſt half way in diſcovering what Power is given it in the Goſpel.

CHAP. III.

What Figure FAITH made in Natural Religion?

Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, a Cardinal Virtue, Juſtice toward God, to whom it payeth what is due: To his Veracity,

racity, *Let God be True*; to his Faithfulneſs, let God be Juſt; to his Power, let God be *Able* to perform his Promiſes, *&c.* That this was taught by Natural Religion before *Moſes* brought the Poſitive into the world, and that the Goſpel buildeth upon that foundation, if any one doubt, let him but read the 4*th.* Chapter of St. *Paul's* Epiſtle to the *Romans*, he will there find *Abraham's* Faith recommended to us for a Pattern, with an Explanation of the Bleſſing he obtained by it, and who are to be Heirs to it: Not the Children of his *Loyns*, but of his *Faith*, muſt be Heirs; thoſe who *walk in his ſteps*, ſhall reſt in his boſom; and after a deſcription of his Heroical Faith, the Panegyrick is cloſed with a Declaration, *that Theſe things are written, not for* Abraham's *ſake alone, but for ours alſo.*

That we may walk in his ſteps, it will be requiſite we Trace them; which if we do, we ſhall find large ſteps on either ſide; Great *Confidence* in God's Faithfulneſs on one ſide, and great *Obedience* to his Commands on the other; by the one he Sacrificed his *Reaſon*, by the other his *Iſaac.*

1. *His Confidence* in God's Faithfulneſs was ſo firm, that he *ſtaggered not*, but ſtood *ſtrong* in his *Belief*, and proceeded in his *Obedience*, notwithſtanding all Oppoſite Diſcouragements from the Laws of *Nature*, or Dictates of *Reaſon.* It was againſt the courſe of Nature, that he ſhould have a Child, when both his own and *Sarah's* Bodies were no better than dead, as to Power of Generation; and more againſt the Dictates of Reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a Father after he was Sacrificed: Yet did not either the One or the Other ſeem ſo impoſſible, as that God ſhould *Lie.*

He knew him infinite in Wiſdom, Power, and Truth; that he could ſome way or other, undiſcovered to Human eyes, perform his Promiſes; and ſince no *other* way appeared, the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, ſuppoſeth he believed, that *God was able to raiſe him from the dead.* And in theſe ſteps of our Father *Abraham*, the Apoſtle exhorteth us to walk after him; but we muſt do it——*non paſſibus æquis.* For *raiſing of the dead* was a

thing unheard of to *Abraham*; whereas the ſame Son of God, in whom we are to believe, gave us an Experiment of it in his own Reſurrection; ſo that to *Abraham*'s Faith, and ours, may be Applied our Lord's Words to *Thomas*, *we believe after we have ſeen*; but Bleſſed *Abraham* had neither ſeen, nor heard, yet believed. Yet tho' we have but the Faith of *Thomas*, it ſhall be *imputed to us for Righteouſneſs*. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Chriſt was deliv red for our Offences, and Raiſed again for our Juſtification*: We are juſtified by his *Blood*, becauſe thereby our ſins are blotted out; but we are juſtified by his *Reſurrection*, becauſe thereon our Faith is built: For thereby we are convinced of the Truth which we are to believe, and by that belief to be juſtified, as was *Abraham*. So plain it is, that the Faith which the Goſpel requireth had its foundation in Natural Religion; and while *Abraham* is propoſed as the *Father of the Faithful*, Moral Faith is alſo propoſed as the Mother of the Evangelical. That in the Law *to believe in God* ſhould never be Commanded, nor ſo much as Recommended more than Once, and that with no higher Eulogy than this, *Abraham believed God, and it was Accounted to him for Righteouſneſs*; nor by any of the Prophets, but once, *viz. The juſt ſhall Live by his Faith*; this is no wonder at all: For whoever hath ſo much Religion as to believe there is a God, muſt believe him to be Abſolutely Perfect; which he could not be, if he want either Veracity or Power; and if he be infinite in Both, it muſt be impoſſible for him to lye, or fail of performing his Promiſes.

This therefore needeth neither Revelation for want of Evidence, nor Precept for want of a plain Obligation: And the Old Teſtament muſt have done impertinently if without any need, it ſhould have offered the one or the other.

Yet though the Old Teſtament give us no Command, it doth give us Warnings by the Puniſhment of Unbelievers. *Sarah*, for her believing Husbands ſake, eſcaped with a gentle Reprimand, though her Unbelief of the Truth of God's Meſſenger, were aggravated with a double Untruth of her own: For tho'

ſhe

ſhe laughed at the Promiſe of a Son in her Old Age, and then denyed that ſhe did ſo laugh; yet did the Angel reprove her with no other Sharpneſs, but that of Reaſon, againſt her double Fault. *Is any thing impoſſible with God?* was an Argument drawn from Natural Religion, ſo forcible, as to triumph over all Natural Cauſes, and ſtop the Mouth of all other Infidelity, but that of the Atheiſt.

But *Lot*'s Wife, after ſo manifeſt Experience of the Power of her Gueſts, in delivering themſelves from the Force of the whole City, by ſmiting ſmall and Great with Blindneſs, believed not their Threats to deſtroy the ſame City with Fire; but turning *back from behind* her believing flying Husband (whoſe Haſte to ſave himſelf, and Obedience to the Prohibition of the Angels (*ſaying look not behind thee*) hindered him from perceiving it) returning into the curſed City, there periſhed among her wicked Neighbours, and became a *Pillar of Salt*, that is, in the Hebrew Idiom, *an everlaſting Monument*, of the Puniſhment due to Unbelievers.

When to a ſtarving City, the Prophet of God promiſed a greater Plenty the next day, than ever had been known in any; the incredulous Lord had This Puniſhment, that he *ſaw it with his eyes*, for the Conviction of his Unbelief, but could not taſt it for the ſatisfaction of his Hunger. The Unbelieving *Iſraelites*, who lived upon daily Experience of God's Power, when they diſtruſted his Promiſe of Victory over the tall and mighty *Canaanites*, periſhed in the Wilderneſs; and thoſe that asked, *Can God prepare a Table in the Wilderneſs?* fell under his Wrath with the Meat in their Mouths.

The ſame Light which ſheweth us the *Being* of God, ſheweth alſo his *Perfections*; and to give an Expreſs Law, or uſe any other means to perſwade a Belief in him, had been as needleſs, as to perſwade me to believe the Sun ſhineth; which were an Affront both to the Sun's, Light, and my Eyes.

And thus I hope I have proved, that Faith in God is a Duty of Natural Religion, a *Moral Vertue*, and to be valued for its intrinſick

intrinſick Worth, as a *Participation of the Divine Nature*, in one of God's Attributes, his *Juſtice*; and we may well proceed to conſider, that beſide this *Intrinſick Worth*, whereby it deſerveth to be valued as *Self-good*; it hath another Worth, as a Serviceable *Means* to All other Graces and Duties: For,

2. *FAITH* is a great Promoter of *Obedience*; and whereas the Old Teſtament ſeemeth ſilent herein, we have a whole and large Chapter in the New, aſcribing all the Heroical Actions, and Sufferings of the Patriarchs to This Grace: and ſo by a kind of Poſtluminium, aſſerting the Right which Natural Religion taught, and God might (if he had pleaſed) have by Law required.

And that it may be Proved as clearly as Aſſerted, an Argument is offered in the Entrance upon the Diſcourſe: *By Faith* Enoch *was tranſlated, having received this Teſtimony, that he pleaſed God; but without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, for he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him:* Which Argument will receive a little Light from the Phraſe wherein the Teſtimony was given, and whereto the Argument referrs. It is ſaid, *Gen.* 5. 22. Enoch *walked with God*, and now the *Sorites* runs thus, He that doth not *Walk* with God, cannot *Pleaſe* God, he that doth not *Come* to God, cannot *Walk* with God, he that doth not *Believe* that God *is, and is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, cannot *Come* to him, nor will he ſeek after him.

After this Argument, we have a Muſter of many Atchievments performed by Faith, in the Patriarchs and others, among whom ſtandeth Father *Abraham*, like *Saul* among the People, Taller by the Head; not only than all there *Preſent*, but than all mere Men, that ever were, or 'tis likely, ſhall be. The Obedience of *Abraham* was moſt wonderful, both as to the *Matter* and *Manner* of it.

1. The *Matter* was ſuch, as he muſt needs have had a mighty Temptation to Diſpute it; and to Plead God's *Promiſe* in bar

to

to his *Command.* God had given him This Son, 'tis true, but with a Promiſe annexed, that This Son, This Very Son *Iſaac*, ſhould be Father of a numerous and bleſſed Poſterity: And ſince this depended upon his Life; whatever Right God might have to his Obedience, himſelf had a Right in God's Promiſe, which he could not be obliged to Renounce.

2. The *Manner* of his Obedience was as wonderful, conſidering the Chearfulneſs and Diligence of the Performance. For though *Iſaac* were endeared to him by long Deſpair, and then by Glorious Promiſes; though he muſt periſh not by an Ordinary or Honourable Death, but that of a Beaſt; though the tender Father muſt not Hear of this by Meſſengers, but muſt Torment his Eyes, yea, imbrue his Hands too in the Cruel Butchery; though in ſo doing, he muſt offer little leſs Violence to his Reaſon, than to his *Iſaac*; though all this might well have Staggered, yea quite Overthrown both Faith and Obedience; yet is he ſo far from Staggering, that he Stands unſhakenly firm to his Duty: doth not plead the Scandal of ſo Cruel, ſo Inhuman, and Unnatural an Action, as muſt make his Perſon and his Religion ſtink among his Neighbours; doth not intercede for his only Son as for *Sodom*, ſaying, *ſhall not the God of all the World do Right?* Doth not petition for him, as *Moſes* did for the People, that God would reverſe his Sentence, or as *Jeptha*'s Daughter did for a little Time of Reprieve; but without the leaſt Tergiverſation, is equally Diligent and Cautious in the Execution; riſeth early in the morning, hideth his Purpoſe from his Wife, leſt ſhe ſhould hinder it, taketh with him but two Servants, and them he leaveth at ſuch a Diſtance, as to prevent the Reſcue which their Officiouſneſs might make of their *Young* Maſter, from the ſeeming Madneſs of their *Old* One; drilling *Iſaac* himſelf along with Pretence, that God would provide a Lamb: What could the moſt Tender Father do more, to *Save* the Life of an Only Son? *Hæc eſt Fides*, ſaid *Nero*, when his Servant, to ſatisfie his Humour, killed himſelf; this is ſuch a Faith, as might well be *imputed to* Abraham

for

for Righteouſneſs, and propoſed to us for a Pattern; and ſtop the Mouth of all Objections, againſt Faiths being worthy of God's Acceptance, or of a Place among Moral Vertues, which are the Graces in Natural Religion.

And as it hath the Worth, ſo it hath the Unhappineſs of a Vertue, beſet on either ſide with a Vice, Defect on one ſide, and Exceſs on the other: On the One ſide, Infidelity is the Defect, on the other ſide, Credulity is the Exceſs of Faith; and as is uſual with all Vertues, we find it reproached under the Name of the Exceſs, whereof it is no wiſe guilty, as we come to conſider in our Second Propoſition.

CHAP. IV.

Credulity is not FAITH, but an Oppoſite Vice.

II. CREDULITY is not Faith, but as oppoſite to it, as Vice is to Vertue: As Fool-hardineſs is to Valour, Prodigality to Bounty, and all Exceſs to Prudence, which is the Soul of all Vertue whatever.

We have reduced Faith to *Juſtice*; becauſe its proper Work is to pay God the Confidence due to his Veracity. And herein we ſeem to be out of all Danger of Exceſs, ſeeing God's Faithfulneſs is Infinite: And ſo indeed we are, while we make our Payment to the Right Object. For to God is due, not only Actual Belief of every Word which we know him to have ſpoken, but an Habitual Readineſs to believe any other, whenever it ſhall appear to come from him, and all without reſerve for any ſeeming contradicting of Senſe or Reaſon.

Our only danger of Exceſs therefore lieth in our Miſtake, not of the *Degree*, but the *Object*; and this we incur if we pay that Confidence to any Creature which is due to God only.

Our

Our excellent *Chillingworth* ſpake no leſs Modeſtly, than Rationally, when he ſaid, that he had often demanded of the Romaniſts, why *implicit Faith in our Lord*, might not as well avail for Juſtification, as *implicit Faith in the Church*; but could never receive an Anſwer to ſo plain, and important a Queſtion: It is indeed too much to be Anſwered, Yet too little to be Demanded; for it ought to be Raiſed to a Demand, *how any Church dare Challenge*, or any *Perſon dare Pay*, that Faith to Any, yea to All the Creatures in Heaven and Earth, which is Due to God only? This is Injuſtice to God, for two plain Reaſons.

1. It is a kind of Spiritual Polytheiſm; ſuch a falling down and Worſhipping the Creature, as muſt provoke Him who Declareth himſelf a *jealous God*, that will not *give his Honour to Another: Let God be true, and every Man a Lyar*, is a Double Word of God's own Mouth; and he that doth not believe the Latter as well as the Former, maketh God a Lyar, and Man a God.

2. Thoſe who ſo Require *implicit Faith* in any other Authority, as to *Contradict Reaſon*; give God the Lie, by making him contradict himſelf. For Reaſon is no leſs the Word of God, written in Mans Heart, than is the Scripture written on Paper; Parallel to what St. *Paul* ſaith of One Law written *in Tables of Stone*, and another *in fleſhly Tables of the Heart*. Yea therefore, and therefore Only, are we to believe whatever we find in Scripture, becauſe we are by plain Reaſon Convinced, that it is the Word of God, whom we muſt believe in Defiance to all Oppoſition whatſoever. *The ſpirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord, Searching the innermoſt parts of the Belly*, ſaith *Solomon*. The *ſpirit* is that part of our frame, wherein *we are Created in Knowledge after the Image of God*: And in the *fleſhly Tables of our Hearts*, are his Words Written with the ſame finger, as were his Laws in the *Tables of Stone*; and therefore to ſay that this *Candle* Contradicteth the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, is no leſs injurious to *God*, than to his Image and Workmanſhip.

There is indeed in *that*, as in *this* light, great difference of degrees in point of Brightneſs: Some Truths appear ſo Plain, that the Weakeſt, yea the Soreſt, Eye cannot avoid ſeeing and acknowledging them; but ſome are ſo Small or ſo Remote, that they may deceive or eſcape the Beſt: which cannot prejudice Belief of ſuch Great Truths, as appear plain both by Sunſhine and Candlelight, whereof the Latter never Contradicteth the Former, though it cannot Reach ſo Far, or Shine ſo Bright.

Abraham's Faith is our conſtantly ſerviceable Pattern: It ſeemed utterly Repugnant to plain Reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a Father of Nations if he were ſacrificed; but it ſeemed much more ſo, that God ſhould be Unfaithful; and therefore, when *Abraham* believed, he did no leſs Juſtice to his own Reaſon, than to God's Faithfulneſs.

To make this (if poſſible) yet plainer, we muſt diſtinguiſh between matter of *Faith*, and matter of *Fact*: Matter of Faith, is this only Propoſition, that it is *Impoſſible God ſhould lie*; and to This, *Abraham* ſtood firm, without ſtaggering at the ſeeming Oppoſition, between the Promiſe and the Command: But that God firſt made ſuch a Promiſe, and then impoſed ſuch a Command, this was Matter of Fact; wherein, though the Scripture be ſilent, Reaſon is not; For it will not ſuffer us to Doubt that *Abraham* was by Sufficient (though to us Unrevealed) Evidences, no leſs Secure This way, than Confident the Other way. Elſe might he more juſtly be Blamed as Diſhonouring God with a thought, that He could be Author of a *Cruel Command*; than Juſtified for his Confidence in a Faithfulneſs, which had been Unconcerned, if his Command had not been Evidently Revealed.

So there muſt be two Meaſures for our Belief: of the one kind is the Faithfulneſs of the Perſon, in whom we believe: if God be the Perſon, our Belief muſt be Abſolute, becauſe his Veracity is Infinite; if Man be the Perſon, our Belief muſt be Wary, becauſe Man is a Lyar, or at leaſt may Suſpected to be ſo.

Of

Of the other kind, is the Evidence which we have, that what is offered us for the Word of God, is really ſuch: and to *this* we muſt pay neither More or Leſs Belief, than Reaſon will prove Due; provided we be ſtill ready to pay more, as our Evidence ſhall increaſe, and that becauſe our Reaſon for Belief will increaſe equally with ſuch Evidence. This is all that Juſtice can Demand; and whoever payeth more, doth it in his Own Wrong, and perhaps in God's too.

A ſad Example hereof we have in the Prophet, that by the Word of the Lord came from *Juda* to *Bethel*, and to the King's Face, Propheſied the Deſtruction of his Altar: He obeyed a Troubleſome and Hazardous Command, refuſed a Royal Invitation, Returned homeward another way than that by which he came, and in every thing conformed to his Commiſſion. But when an Old Prophet ſaid to him, *I am a Prophet as well as thou art, and an Angel ſpake unto me by the Word of the Lord, ſaying, Bring him back with thee into thine Houſe, that he may Eat Bread, and Drink Water:* The Eaſy Good Man, believing the Malicious Lying one, was puniſhed, not ſo properly for his *Diſobedience*, as his *Credulity*. This being the Rule (ſay the Rabbins and Reaſon) that when a Prophet hath received a Word *immediately from God*, he muſt not believe any other than an equally *immediate Word of God* in Contradiction to it.

The Example joyneth cloſe with the Caſe before us. Whatever we hear from *Clear Reaſon*, we hear from a *Word of God:* who ever would perſwade us to disbelieve it, muſt produce ſuch Credentials, as may Convince us to the Contrary; If he do this, Reaſon immediately tacketh about in Conformity to the Evidence, as to Another Word of the ſame God: But if no other Credentials be offered than his Own, or ſome Other Humane (that is, Fallible or Fallacious) Authority; we are no more to comply with it, than the True Prophet ought to have done with the lying one.

The End perhaps of ſuch Credulous Perſons, may be leſs dismal, they may not become the *Lions* Prey; but they have al-

ready made themſelves the *Aſſes* Companions, by ſubmitting their Underſtandings to the Saddle, impoſed on them by a dull Miſtake of *Credulity toward Man*, for *Faith toward God*; more obvious than that of the Fool-hardy Prodigal, or any other Over-doer, that by Exceſs vitiateth a Vertue.

By theſe Plain and Vulgar Principles of Morality, we underſtand in Believing, as we do in All other Actions, what is Virtuous or Vicious; and ſo do we alſo, why ſo Little hath been ſpoken of it by *Moſes* and the Prophets, and ſo Much by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. Natural Religion *Claimed* it as due to God, and *Forbad* to pay it to any Creature; and upon that Account there was *no* need of an Expreſs Precept; but the Goſpel required a Belief of Truths, never before heard of, and upon this New Account, there was the *greateſt* need, not only of an Expreſs Command, but ſuch Repeated Importunities, as might outvoice both Reaſon, when it ſhould decry ſuch a Belief; and Intereſt, when it ſhould rebel againſt convinced Reaſon; Both whereof concurred againſt the Belief, which our Lord required, if they were not ſubdued with Clear Evidences of his Divine Authority.

CHAP. V.

Why FAITH *maketh a greater Figure under the Goſpel, than it did under the Law?*

FOR our yet clearer View of the Reaſon, why Faith ſhould make ſo much a greater Figure in the Goſpel, than it did under the Law, let us parallel *Faith* towards Chriſt, with *Loyalty* towards the King. *Loyalty* is a ſtanding Duty, which at all times muſt be paid to the King. In Peaceable Times, as there is no Occaſion for any Proclamation to Require it, ſo there is no

no Reaſon to promiſe it any other Reward, but what the Laws of Government promiſe at All Times, to good Subjects, *viz.* protection in their juſt Rights: But if a Prince be Dethroned, and Baniſhed, and ſo diſabled to defend his own Power, and his Subjects Lives; if Loyalty now ſhall expoſe a Good Subject to as *great* Puniſhments, as in good Times are the Rewards of Rebellion. In this Caſe, Policy, and a Regard for his own Intereſts, concur with Juſtice to a good Subjects Merits, to perſwade the Prince, by publick Proclamations and private Meſſages, and all other poſſible Means, to encourage his Subjects with Liberal Promiſes, that ſo they may find it their Intereſt, as well as their Duty, to imploy their endeavours in their Injured Prince's Behalf.

Juſt thus it is in the *Preſent* Caſe: Faith is a ſtanding Duty to Chriſt, and muſt be paid at all Times to the end of the World. But at that Time, when our Lord firſt Claimed it, and St. *Paul* ſpoke ſuch great things of it, there were extraordinary Reaſons for the Importunities and Promiſes, wherewith It was Then honoured, and the World Solicited; ſome of which Reaſons, in Theſe days, when the Chriſtian Religion hath been long eſtabliſhed, have loſt their Influence; as after the Settlement of the Prince upon his Throne, Loyalty loſeth its Merit, and claimeth no other Reward, than bare Safety and Indemnity.

Thoſe Extraordinary Reaſons may be reduced to Three: 1. The *Difficulties* of Believing. 2. The *Danger* of Profeſſing it. 3. The *Neceſſity* of Both.

I. THE *Difficulties* at Firſt were many and great; the Command was Short, but Hard: *You believe in God, believe alſo in Me. You believe in God*, you cannot avoid ſo doing, and the very Notion of a God exacts it from you: You cannot believe there is a God, without believing him to be *Infinite*, as in all other Perfections, ſo in *Faithfulneſs*; and this will require on your part Suitable, *i. e. Abſolute Confidence*. The ſame Infinite, Abſolute, Implicit Belief, which you thus acknowledge due to *GOD*,

is

is alſo due to *ME*; I am come from Heaven, to be the *Light* of this lower World in *Spiritual* Things, as the Sun is in *Corporal*; and whatever I ſpeak, I require you to believe with the ſame Confidence, as you would a Particular Word from Heaven, or a Manifeſt Object of ſight enlightened by the Sun.

This *at That Time* (ſtill I ſay *at That Time*) when our Lord put in ſuch a Claim, and his Apoſtles pleaded for it, ſeemed a very Hard, becauſe very Unreaſonable Command, both to *Jews* and *Greeks*; it was *to the* Jews *a Stumbling-block, and to the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs*; *for the* Jews *required a Sign, and the* Greeks *ſought after Wiſdom*, and he that would Believe, muſt run Counter to them Both; that is, to the Whole World: for ſo did the *Jews* Object to St. *Paul*, *We know that this Sect is every where ſpoken againſt.*

1. *The* Greeks *ſought after Wiſdom*, and to Them ſuch a Belief ſeemed *Fooliſhneſs*. Their Wiſdom, was Prudence; their Religion, Vertue: The ſame Religion which taught to pay God Abſolute Belief, taught them alſo to Meaſure their Belief toward Man, by the Credibility of the Speaker, or of the Word by him ſpoken; and whatever exceeded *This* Meaſure, was in their Opinion Fooliſhneſs, becauſe Unreaſonable Credulity.

But if Religion were no leſs concerned than Reaſon, then muſt Impiety join with Fooliſhneſs; and as it doubled the Vice, ſo did it the Caveat: for as all Change of Opinion is difficult, ſo is that of Religion moſt ſo. The World was never poſſeſſed by any Religion ſo abſurd, but that Education and Growth gave it ſuch Roots, as would not be pluck'd up with Eaſe, or a little Labour; yea, moſt Men have no other Reaſon for their Religion, but that which equally prevails for the Worſt as for the Beſt. The Whimſies of *Mahomet* are no leſs confidently embraced, and zealouſly defended and propagated, than the Holy Doctrines of the Bleſſed Jeſus. The Worſhippers of (God's Mirror) the Sun, yea of the *Works of Mens Hands in Wood and Stone*, are no leſs tenacious of their Folly, than We are of the Truth: Thoſe who Worſhip what they Eat, believe all

thoſe

thoſe damned who will not pull out their Eyes and do the ſame. Since therefore none could believe in Chriſt, without renouncing the Religion whereof he was poſſeſſed; This alone made it very difficult.

And the very Meanneſs of the Perſon, was a mighty prejudice againſt ſo great a Claim. This had no part in the Tryal of *Abraham*'s Faith; He was no leſs ſure that he had God's Command for Sacrificing *Iſaac*, than that he had his Promiſe for a bleſſed Poſterity from his Loins: but *here* the great Difficulty is the Credibility of the Perſon, commanding and promiſing ſuch great Things, That *He* could give his Followers Eternal Life, who could not as they thought, ſave himſelf from the moſt Shameful and Painful Death; that he could give the Inheritance of a *Kingdom*, who had not *where to lay his head*; that the Son of a Carpenter was the Son of God; that a *Man of Sorrows* was the *Lord* of *Glory*; theſe appeared ſuch Abſurdities to their Reaſon, that thoſe who ſought after *Wiſdom*, muſt needs find it extremely difficult to ſwallow them.

2. *The* Jews *required a Sign*, and ſuch a Sign, as might be no leſs too mighty for all thoſe which had been wrought by *Moſes*'s Rod, than was his Serpent for thoſe of the *Egyptian* Magicians. The Founders of all other Religions, wheedled the Credulous Crowd into a Belief of their Familiarity with ſome God: Thus did *Numa* impoſe upon his *Romans*, and *Mahomet* upon his *Arabians*: But *Moſes* was publickly owned by God in the eyes of the whole People, who for the ſpace of Forty Years lived upon Miracles under his Conduct; they ſaw and heard the dreadful Thunders and Lightnings which promulgated their Laws, which they therefore believed muſt be Immortal, becauſe they knew them to be Divine: And can they believe *him* to come from the ſame God, who in their Opinion, prophaned the Sabbath which That Law had made the Cognizance of his peculiar People? It is true, the Miracles which our Lord, and (after him) his Apoſtles wrought, were Many and Great, ſufficient to Convince any unprejudic'd Perſon; but as they were not equally publick, as

was

was the appearance of God on Mount *Sinai*, ſo were they Oppoſed by Prejudices, with which *Moſes* met not in the minds of the People.

To this Prejudice derived from *Religion*, add another from *Intereſt*. They called the Law their Inheritance, and as ſuch they valued it; they look't down upon the גוים the profane reſidue of Mankind, as no leſs Inferior to their holy Selves, than Superior to the Beaſts: And that they ſhould be Levelled into an Equality with the *Gentiles*, how incredible it appeared, we may meaſure from the Aſtoniſhment of the great Apoſtle, who ſpeaks of it, as if he were again Struck down by a Light, and Voice from Heaven. *Eph.* 1. 11. *By Revelation he made known to me the Myſtery*, &c. and verſe the 9*th*. *To make all Men ſee what is the Fellowſhip of the Myſtery, which from the beginning of the World hath been hid in God, who Created all things by Jeſus Chriſt, to the intent that now unto Principalities, and Powers in Heavenly places, might be known by the Church, the Manifold Wiſdom of God, according to the Eternal purpoſe, which he purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* What is This ſo wonderful Myſtery? even this, which cannot be Comprehended in one Clauſe, that the *Gentiles ſhould be Fellow-Heirs, and of the ſame body, and Partakers of God's promiſes in Chriſt by the Goſpel.* By ſuch Amazement of this great Apoſtle, we may judge of his whole Nation; and by the Aſtoniſhment of Him, who would not have believed upon any leſs Evidence than a Revelation, we may ſafely Meaſure the Difficulty, which lay upon all thoſe that were Trained up in the ſame Religon.

Another Stumbling-Block lay quite Croſs their Way, becauſe Croſs to their Expectations: They lookt for a *Meſſiah* that by his Victories ſhould no leſs advance them in *Proſperity* above all other Nations, than *Moſes* by his Law had advanced them in *Holineſs*: A *Meſſiah*, whoſe Perſon ſhould be Illuſtrious, his Sword Victorious, his Reign Glorious, and *of whoſe Kingdom there ſhould be no end*, either in point of Extent or Duration. Such a *Meſſiah* did their Prophets promiſe, and the time appointed

ed was now fulfilled; their expectations therefore were big, and their longings ardent: And muſt this Triumphant *Meſſiah* now dwindle into a poor *Galilean*? muſt their Expected Triumphs ſink into this diſmal promiſe, *He that will be my Diſciple, muſt take up his Croſs and Follow me*? This was therefore a great Stumbling-block to their Underſtandings, becauſe it lay Croſs to their Intereſts; they were the more Unable, becauſe Unwilling, to believe it; which therefore Required a Weight of importunities and promiſes, ſufficient to Counterballance the Double weight of Reluctancies. Nor was this the worſt. For,

II. *The Danger* was at That time no leſs than the *Difficulty*. As it was extraordinary in point of Danger to the Diſciples, ſo did it require ſuch Extraordinary Promiſes, and importunities from our Lord, as might induce them both to Combat all Difficulties, and out-face all Danger.

In good and peaceable times, when a Prince exerciſeth his Power without oppoſition, as there is no Merit in Loyalty, ſo is there no Proclamation of Reward to it. But if he be driven from his Throne, and diſabled not only to Govern his Subjects, but to Defend Himſelf; if Loyalty be treated as Rebellion, and to Aſſert the Oppreſſed Prince's Right, be a Forfeiture of Life and Eſtate; in ſuch a Caſe, the Prince's Intereſt concurreth with Juſtice, to perſwade him to Encourage his good Subjects with Promiſes as Extraordinary as his Own Needs, and Their Danger.

Juſt thus it was in thoſe times when Faith made ſo great a Figure in the Goſpel, that it ſeemed to ingroſs the Whole duty of a Chriſtian, and All the promiſes of Salvation. Had it been ſufficient to have believed without Publiſhing it, whatever the Difficulty might have been, the Safety might have Equalled it: But this could not be Accepted; the Mouth muſt joyn with the Heart, *Ro.* 10. 10. *For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth Confeſſion is made unto Salvation.* *Nicodemus* came to our Lord with the Former without

the Latter; for coming *by night*, and privately owning what he was either *Aſhamed* or *Afraid* Openly to profeſs, he is told in the Rabbinical Stile, that unleſs by Baptiſm he make Open Profeſſion of his Faith, he cannot be a Chriſtian, *Jo.* 3. To the ſame Senſe alſo did our Lord tell his Apoſtles, when he Commiſſioned them to Preach the Goſpel, *He that Believeth, and is Baptized, ſhall be ſaved:* Not ſimply, *he that Believeth*, but *he that Believeth and is Baptized*; ſo making a Publick Profeſſion of his Belief, and himſelf a Viſible Member of Chriſt's Church, which that way he muſt make himſelf known to be.

The Rulers had no leſs Malice in their hearts, than Power in their hands, againſt all that ſhould Profeſs a Faith, which muſt aboliſh the Law of *Moſes*, which they gloried in, as advancing them to a ſingular holineſs above All Other Nations; which yet were no leſs enemies to the ſame New *Religion*, becauſe it muſt deſtroy their Idols. Our Saviour therefore dealeth plainly and faithfully, ſaying, *He that will be my Diſciple, muſt take up his Croſs and Follow me: He that hateth not Father and Mother, Yea, and his own Life alſo, cannot be my Diſciple. I ſend you forth as Lambs among Wolves; ye ſhall be brought before Governors, and Kings for my Names ſake*, &c.

Such hardſhips were not more contrary to the Appetites of Fleſh and Blood, than to the Notions they had been Educated in, of great Proſperity under the *Meſſiah*. They had dreamed of another kind of *Victory over the World*, than what St. *John* boaſted, ſaying, *This is the Victory which overcometh the World, even your Faith*. That Faith which overcometh the World by ſuffering all kinds of Perſecutions in this Life, in aſſurance of glorious Rewards in another, was no leſs unwelcome than the miſeries, which it muſt Triumph Over.

And in this, the Faith of the Chriſtian outvyeth That of *Abraham* himſelf. There was indeed a danger that he might loſe his *Iſaac*, if God would not reſtore him to Life when Sacrificed; but he had an experiment of God's Power to give him Another Son, notwithſtanding his Old Age, if he would not reſtore

ſtore the ſame: But to the Faithful Diſciples of Chriſt there was apparent, not Danger only, but Certainty, of Loſing their *All*, *Children*, *Parents*, *Lands*, *Liberty*, *yea Life it ſelf.*

Bleſſed be the gracious providence of God, that now, and for many ages, the wind is turned to the contrary point. Our Education maketh it now as *Difficult*, and our Laws as *Dangerous*, to Deny Chriſt, as at firſt it was to Confeſs him: and Conſequently the Extraordinary worth it might derive from thoſe Topicks, muſt now be Lower'd; and when it ſhall thus be reduced to its Ordinary and Permanent worth, it will appear (like Loyalty in peaceable times) a Common Grace, worthy of no greater than Common Rewards. For now it's whole Excellency is owing to it's Fruits, wherein alſo it falleth ſhort of what it bore in the times of it's planting.

III. The *Neceſſity* of Profeſſing Faith was equal to the *Difficulty and Danger*: And indeed without This, the other two, or either of them, would have made the Command Unreaſonable.

That Prince would not deſerve to be Owned in the Beſt of times, much leſs to be Fought for in the Worſt, that ſhould Needleſly impoſe Hard and Dangerous Services upon his good Subjects.

To expoſe them to the Hardſhips and Dangers of a *Neceſſary* War, hath always been juſtified in the beſt Kings; and to encourage their valour with promiſe of ſuitable Rewards, is equally Juſt and Wiſe: But to expoſe them to fight with Beaſts, only for the Pleaſure of the Spectacle, was abhorred by Faithful Chriſtians, when practiſed by wanton Heathens. Let us therefore diſtinguiſh the Times.

1. This Neceſſity of the Profeſſion of Faith had ſomething ſingular at *that* time, when it was firſt exalted to ſuch Honor. A Great and Dangerous work muſt be performed. *The Kingdom of Heaven* muſt ſubdue all the reſiſting world: God's Worſhip muſt be ſtript of all thoſe Ceremonies, wherewith his own

hand had dreſt it, and reduced to *ſimple* nakedneſs of *ſpirit and truth*; the Partition-*wall* muſt be broken down, which appropriated God's holy people &c. Toward ſo great a work he came furniſhed with no other power, but that of working Miracles for mens Conviction: And ſhould thoſe who were thereby Convinced, hide their Belief within their own Breaſts, it could only have brought ſome particular Perſons, not whole Nations to Subjection. It was therefore Neceſſary to call aloud not only for *Belief*, but for *Profeſſion* of it: And ſince ſuch a Profeſſion at ſuch a Time, muſt run ſuch a Gantlop, between Difficulties and Dangers, it was but reaſonable, that the importunities of the Calls, and the price of the Promiſes, ſhould join with the Neceſſity of the Performance to out-weigh ſo great Diſcouragements.

2. Though in ſuch Extraordinary reſpects, the Neceſſity be now abated, ſo that every Believer need not be a *Preacher* or *Confeſſor* in the hardeſt Senſe; yet there ſtill remaineth a Neceſſity of Faith, and the Profeſſion of it, from the influence it *naturally* hath upon the Believers *Actions*; and ſince Theſe muſt always be Holy, That muſt always be Indiſpenſible.

Loyalty is Loyalty at all Times. In the worſt of Times it will Fight, in the beſt it will Obey: and when it hath *no* Occaſion, will be Ready to approve it ſelf as it ought, upon *all* Occaſions. And Faith is Faith at all Times. When the World fighteth againſt its Lord, it will fight againſt the World in his Cauſe: it hath the ſame Valour, when it hath not the ſame Occaſion to exerciſe it by ſuffering, as had the Primitive Chriſtians; and it hath ever the Faithfulneſs to fight againſt all kinds of Enemies to his Kingdom, Fleſh and Blood, and Spiritual Wickedneſs, and whatever will not have the Lord to rule over it.

The Chriſtian in the moſt peaceable Times, is a Souldier, Liſted under his Lord's Banner in Baptiſm: he muſt follow (when called) the *Captain of his Salvation, that was made Perfect by Sufferings*; and when Tempted, he muſt walk in the ſteps of his Father *Abraham*, ſacrifice his Luſts, though no leſs dear than was his *Iſaac*.

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Our Lord therefore is not like ſome weak Princes, that upon meer unaccountable Caprichio's, load their good Subjects with heavy Burthens, and advance worthleſs Favourites to undeſerved Honours; but meaſureth his Laws by his Subjects Needs. Our Lord declareth, that the Reaſon of his coming into the World, was his Fathers and *his* Love to it, and it muſt be a greater Myſtery than any he hath required us to Believe, if he ſhould pleaſe ſo to treat the World which he ſo Dearly loved, as to require men upon pain of Eternal Death, to believe beyond what is *needful* for their Salvation. For ſhould he require more than is *needful* he muſt do it either for ſome other reaſon, or without any reaſon at all. If we believe him to require Faith for any Other reaſon, than becauſe it is Neceſſary for our incouragement to Holineſs, in order to our Happineſs, we diſhonour him, becauſe No other reaſon can be worthy of his Goodneſs or Majeſty: If upon No reaſon at all, we diſhonour him, becauſe this would contradict his Wiſdom, which never acteth without good reaſon.

And now I hope we ſufficiently diſcover, why Faith is ſo much exalted in the Goſpel. The reaſons are partly Extraordinary and Expired, partly Ordinary and Permanent: The Extraordinary derived from the Circumſtances, wherein the Goſpel was firſt preached. The Ordinary, from it's ſerviceableneſs to the Divine Life, which Natural Religion aimed at, but the Goſpel, by Means of Believing, exalteth with nobler Arguments, as will more clearly appear, if we examine the Subject Matter, which is to be believed.

CHAP. VI.

Of Faith in CHRIST, as Saviour of the World.

THAT the great things that are ſpoken of Faith, oblige us to enquire what are the Neceſſary Articles of Faith is too Clear to need Proof; yet is there nothing leſs Heeded or Underſtood, even by the Inquiſitive: And ſo, That Grace who's great worth

Worth is derived from its ſerviceableneſs to our Happineſs, by diſturbing our Peace, Private and Publick, is made its greateſt Enemy.

Our Preſent Work calleth for Enquiries, not Complaints; and therefore, adjourning theſe to a more proper Time, we ſhall purſue the Enquiry now before us; viz. *What are thoſe ſaving Truths, to the Belief whereof Eternal Life is promiſed?*

And here, our former Remark meets us again. Our Lord avoideth Multiplying Articles of Faith, no leſs than Commands: Theſe are but Two at moſt, *Faith and Repentance*; and Sometimes theſe Two are reduced to One, and to either of them. In the ſame Manner doth he treat Faith: Sometimes its Object is but *One*, and ſometimes *Two*, and ſometimes *Either* of the Two; becauſe they are Two in Notion, but Inſeparable in Action.

There are Two Kinds of Objects of Belief.

I. The PERSON in whom we Believe.

II. The WORD which we believe upon Credit of the PERSON.

And the Promiſe of Eternal Life is given, ſometimes to the *One*, ſometimes to the *Other*, ſometimes to *Both* jointly.

1. Sometimes it is given to Belief in the *Perſon* of Chriſt; and this more *frequently*, becauſe it is the Ground whereon the other is built. This we find in our Lords Diſcourſe with *Nicodemus* and *Martha*, *and in the Cloſe of St.* Johns *Goſpel.*

2. Sometimes it is given to the Belief of the *Promiſe.* Thus St. *Paul*, in his Entrance upon that accurate Diatribe concerning the *Reſurrection*, telleth the *Corinthians*, *This is the Goſpel by which they muſt be ſaved.* And when he pleaded, that *for the hope of the Reſurrection he was called in Queſtion*, he ſpake no leſs Truly than Wiſely; becauſe That is the Subſtance of our Belief.

3. Sometimes it is given to *Both joyntly.* As we found, *Rom.* 10. 9. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe*

believe in thy heart, that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved. And the *Athenians* thought St. *Paul a Setter forth of ſtrange Gods, becauſe he ſpake ſo much of* Jeſus, *and the Reſurrection*; ſuppoſing *Anaſtaſis* to be the Goddeſs to *Jeſus*. Theſe two are ſo nearly Allied, that they cannot be Separated: For whoever believe in Chriſt, as the Son of God, muſt upon his *Credit*, Authoriſed by his *Reſurrection*, believe his *Promiſe*, that they ſhall have a Reſurrection *Themſelves*. Yet as nearly as they are Allied, they are not the Same, and therefore require to be treated Severally.

Firſt therefore we ſhall ſpeak of what is firſt in order of *Nature, Belief in the Perſon:* And that we may do this the more diſtinctly, we ſhall Conſider,

1. *What kind of Perſon our Lord requireth us to believe him to be?*

2. *What is meant by Believing in him?*

1. Concerning the Former, *viz. What kind of Perſon our Lord requireth us to believe him to be?* We muſt conſider that at that time the world was big with Expectation, of ſuch a *Perſon*, as it was never bleſſed with the like ſince it's firſt Creation: a Perſon of whom ſuch glorious things were promiſed, as dazled their Underſtandings; a Perſon that muſt excel *Moſes* in Miracles, *Joſhuah* in Victories, *Solomon* in Riches and Wiſdom; All *Prophets* in Knowledge, and all *Kings* in Power: The *Son*, and yet the *Lord* of *David*, who ſhould not only free them from the then Galling yoke of the *Romans*, but ſubdue thoſe *Romans*, and with them all their Provinces. The time of the promiſed Coming of this great Perſon was now fulfilled, and their Longings ſharpened to ſo much the greater keenneſs.

This *Fulneſs of time* our Lord made the Subject of his firſt Sermon, ſaying, *The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdome of God is at hand.* This was ſo notoriouſly known that it made the *Jews* obſtinate even to *madneſs* in defence of their City and Temple againſt

againſt the *Romans*; yea it made ſo much, and ſo loud Talk in all the Eaſt, that the noiſe reached to *Rome*, and contributed not a little to *Veſpaſians*'s advancement to the Empire, becauſe (ſaith the Hiſtorian) *Percrebuit Sermo*, there was common Talk, that at that time there would ariſe in the Eaſt, a Perſon that ſhould Govern the World.

Such an one had *Daniel* promiſed *Dan.* 7. 13. *There was given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom, that All Nations and Languages ſhould ſerve Him.* The Title there given him, is no other than the *Son of Man*, which our Saviour oft-times aſſumes to himſelf; which that we may underſtand how much it may import, we muſt conſider, that the *Jews* had ſome peculiar Idioms, whereof *two* Principally did import the Eminence of the Subject ſpoken of.

1. They left *That* Indefinite, which they would imply to exceed any Definition: *God do ſo to me and more alſo*, was a curſe which ſignified more than any expreſſion could define: *Therefore I will do This unto thee, and becauſe I will do This unto thee, therefore Prepare to Meet thy God O Iſrael*, ſaid the Prophet; whereby he threatned a Judgment, and required an Atonement *Extraordinary and Unexpreſſible.*

If our Title [*Son of Man*] ſeem not ſufficiently accounted for by this Idiom, and the Prophet *Daniel*'s Prophecy; ſome other of his Characters will. *Joh.* 8. 24. He ſaith of himſelf, *If you believe not that I am He, you ſhall die in your ſins.* The Word *HE* is ſufficiently indefinite, but the Original not having ſo much as *That*, is much more ſo. The Baptiſt ſent Two of his Diſciples to enquire if he were ὁ Ερχόμενος, *He that ſhould come*, and the Multitude bleſſed him in the *Name of the Lord* under *That* Character. The *Meſſiah*, is a Great, but Indefinite Title. Anointing was a Complement of the greateſt Kindneſs and Honour, that could be beſtowed on a Gueſt; and it was preferred to a Ceremony, in beſtowing the higheſt Dignities. *Prophets*, *Prieſts* and *Kings*, were Enſtated by it; and our Lord is thereby characterized, but indefinitely, whether *Prophet*, or *Prieſt*, or *King*, or *All.*

2. Ano-

2. Another Idiom of advancing any thing or perſon, was by entitling it to *God*; thus *Rivers of God*, *Mountains of God*, &c. were the moſt Eminent in their kind: *Man of God* ſignified the moſt excellent Prophet; *Kingdom of God*, the moſt excellent Government; and *the Son of God*, was by *Daniel* made a Character of the greateſt Beauty and Majeſty. For whereas by that Phraſe he deſcribed the 4*th.* in *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Furnace, we are not to imagine that he pretended to have ſeen the *Son of God*, and thereby to know who was like him in Garments or Countenance, but that he uſed that Phraſe, as the higheſt Expreſſion of Extraordinary Beauty.

Theſe high Characters, the *Meſſiah* or *Chriſt*, and the *Son of God*, &c. are given our Lord, ſometimes Severally; ſometimes Jointly, St. *Paul* teſtifieth to the *Jews*, *This* Jeſus *that I preach unto you is the Chriſt*; St. *John* profeſſeth, *Theſe things are written that you may believe, that* Jeſus *is the Chriſt, the Son of God*; and *Martha* declareth, *I believe that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of God, that ſhould come into the World.* And leſt it might ſeem poſſible that ſome other Perſon might be capable of all theſe, however extraordinary Eulogies; to Exalt him *above every Name that may be named*, he ſtileth himſelf, not only the *Son*, but the *Only Begotten Son of God.*

The *other* Characters ſpeak an unmeaſurable Excellency, and this *laſt* a Singular and Incommunicable one: and upon this Singularity of his being *the only begotten Son of God*, expreſſed by his being *anointed before he came into the World*, we ſhall anon find him prefer himſelf above all that were upon leſs Accounts called *Gods.*

Theſe and the like high Characters ſpeak him a Perſon of Super-eminent and Unmeaſurable Greatneſs; a Perſon (like his Emblem, the Light) ſo Glorious, that by our moſt intent View we cannot plainly diſcover any thing of it but *this*, that we cannot diſcover it. And this is ſo far from hindering the Belief which he requireth, that it is the very Reaſon why we are obliged to pay it. For, as we therefore believe in the *Light*, be-

cauſe the ſame Brightneſs which dazleth our Eyes, if we fix them directly upon its Fountain, plainly ſheweth us every thing that it ſhineth on; ſo our Lord, whoſe Divinity maketh the Dignity of his Perſon incomprehenſible, is for *that* very Reaſon to be believed with our utmoſt Confidence.

II. *What is meant by Believing in his Perſon? For* Joh. 12. 35. Jeſus *ſaid* unto them, *yet a little while is the Light with you, walk while you have the Light.—While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the Children of Light.* In which Words he plainly declareth, that all Men are *Travellers*; what the Light is to Travellers, That himſelf is to the World; and therefore, what Confidence the Traveller hath in the Light, the ſame muſt we have in Him.

Should the Wiſeſt, the Greateſt, yea, All the Men in the World, or an Angel from Heaven, contradict the Light, the Traveller would not abate his Belief in it: Should any Authority whatever tell him, That is a Tree, which the Light telleth him is a Stone; ſhould they tell him that is a Path, which the Light telleth him is a River; ſhould they perſwade him to go where the Light ſheweth a Precipice, or that there is no Path where the Light ſheweth a plain one; he would with a little Variation apply to them all, the Authentick Rule, *Let the Light be true, but every Man a Lyar.*

Thus it is, that we are to believe in *Chriſt*; for thus *Abraham* believed in *God*, maugre all Difficulties which his Affection to *Iſaac*, and all the Contradictions which his Reaſon could oppoſe, the one againſt his Obedience, the other againſt his Confidence. And this is our Saviour's Claim, *ye believe in God, believe alſo in Me, i.e.* with the ſame Confidence.

Where the Importance is Unvaluable, no Care can be too great; we ſhould therefore moſt carefully and diſtinctly conſider, that the Light of the Sun may be look'd upon two ways, either with a Wary Eye, diligently but obliquely obſerving what it ſheweth by its Beams; or with a Direct Eye, curiouſly viewing

ing and endeavouring to discover its Features. So our Belief in Christ may look upon him under two Respects: With respect to the *World*, as its *Saviour*; or with respect to his *Person*, as the *Son of God*.

I. *With respect to the World:* Every one seeth the Sun to be under God, its greatest Benefactor, in Communicating the Comforts, which every of its inhabitants enjoyeth. And as this Bounty is the Reason of the Sun's shining, so it is no *Less*, yea it is *More* understood by the Traveller on his Road, than by the Philosopher in his Cell. Thus it is with the *Sun of Righteousness:* His Title is the *Saviour of the World*, and his Business is to make good his Title. This made him *Rise with Healing in his Wings*, and for *This* Reason requireth so to be believed in, as the Sun is by the Traveller, who directeth every step by its light.

What ever the Capacity or Opinion of the Traveller be; whether he be an Illiterate Clown, that thinketh the Sun no bigger than his *Bushel:* or a skilful Astronomer, that can reckon how many hundreds of times he is bigger than the earth; whether he believe the light to be an Accident, or Substance; what ever his Thoughts be of its Nature, Magnitude, Distance, *&c.* still the Sun is his Faithful Guide, whenever he walks by its Light.

And that this Practical Faith is what our Saviour chiefly requireth, seemeth plain, as by other evidences, so by his own words: For when the *Jews* came about him, and said unto him, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be Christ tell us plainly*; and he in answer thereto called God his Father, *they took up stones to stone him, because* (said they) *thou being a man makest thyself God:* He did not, upon so pressing an occasion, Assert his right, but abating so much as Exceeded their Comprehension, satisfied Himself (that he might satisfy *Them*) with what might be sufficient for their Conviction to Salvation: *Is it not written in your Law* (said he) *I have said you are Gods? If he called them Gods to*

whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, ſay ye of him whom the Father hath Sanctified, and ſent into the World, thou Blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid I am the Son of God? That he ſpake this in compliance with their Capacity, not their Rage, appeareth, becauſe when they would not be appeaſed, he eſcaped eaſily out of their hands. It was ſufficient to their Salvation, to know How and Why he came into the world, and that (as his Work, ſo alſo) his Perſon was greater than ever had been in in it ſince its Creation; he ſpeaketh nothing of what he had been from Eternity in Himſelf, but what he was in Relation to the World, and in Compariſon of all Other Meſſengers of God to it.

They were ſent into the world the Common way, and were Afterward ſanctified by receiving God's word; but I, ſaith he, was Firſt Sanctified, and afterward *ſent*; and if they who were Leſs extraordinary, were Honoured with a Higher Title, being called *Gods*; can it be blaſphemy in me who am their Superior, if I take to my ſelf a Meaner Title?

Thus did he (like *Elijah*) contract himſelf to their dimenſions, requiring only Such a Meaſure of Faith as was ſuitable to Their Underſtandings, and His own Deſigns. Were he not greater than *Moſes* and all the Prophets, he could not have Competent Power to advance ſuch a *Kingdom of God*, as muſt abrogate Theſe Laws which were written by God's own Hand. It was therefore neceſſary he ſhould require Such a belief in his Perſon, as might bring the world into ſubjection to his Sceptre: Leſs than *This* cannot ſerve his Ends; and therefore Leſs than *This* he muſt not be thought to Require.

Yet ſince the Fruits of Faith will grow in proportion to the Apprehenſions we have of the Dignity of his Perſon, it will not ſo much concern us to conſider how little his goodneſs may condeſcend to Accept, as how Much is Due to his Greatneſs. For All the Arguments, which riſe from *This* Topick, carry a ſtrength anſwerable to the ſentiments we have thereof. And for that reaſon we proceed to conſider what we are to believe.

2. With

2. *With reſpect to his Perſon:* (The Apoſtles after our Saviours own Example) maketh this a Meaſure of Gods love to the World, that he ſent *his Only begotten Son* to ſave it. Now if we Believe this Only begotten to be the Beſt Man that ever came into the world, yet no more than a Mere Man, the gift could not exceed the Value of a Man. But when we believe him to be no leſs than *God manifeſted in the Fleſh*; then will his love appear ſo much the more *Admirable*, by how much his Blood was more *Precious*.

Or if a *meaner* Motive can more prevail upon us; if ſelf-love will more ſtrongly carry us to labour for a Reward, than Gratitude will to anſwer Obligations, then will our Confidence in his Promiſes, anſwer the Degree of Power wherein our belief ſhall place him who hath given us thoſe Promiſes.

The Death of Chriſt is by the Apoſtle made an Argument to Oblige thoſe to Mutual Love, for whom he ſuffered it. Upon *This* Argument he Exhorteth to forbear the uſe of ſuch Meats as may become dangerous to *others: So* (ſaith he) *ſhall thy weak Brother Periſh for whom Chriſt Died.* But this carried a much greater force as the ſame Apoſtle preſſed it upon the Elders of the Church of Epheſus, *Acts* 20. 28. *Take heed therefore unto your ſelves, and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you Overſeers to feed the Church of God which he hath purchaſed with his Own Blood.*

In a word, as mere Gratitude to ſo great a Saviour, muſt Oblige us to Think and ſpeak the Beſt that poſſibly we can of him, ſo the Power of Belief toward All the good Ends, for which it ſelf is required, muſt engage us to receive in as Proper, and High a ſence as poſſibly we can, All thoſe words of Scripture (and they are not few) wherein we find him declared to be not only the *Son of God*, but *God himſelf*.

Yet on the other ſide, ſeeing the whole Book of God, and the brighteſt light of Reaſon, and the Conſent of All the wiſe men of All Ages and Nations, Unanimouſly Proclaim, that there is but *One God*, and it is not poſſible for us to believe

lieve otherwiſe; therefore here we muſt look about us and Conſider.

For we muſt not doubt but every Word of God is true, and if the Scriptures ſay no leſs plainly, that *Chriſt is God*, than it doth, that there is but *One God*, *even the Father*, 1 *Cor.* 8. 6. then muſt we believe the One and the Other, with equally ſupreme Confidence: Reaſon muſt not make us doubt of the Truth of either; but ſearch out the Truth of Both.

In which Work it will be requiſite, that firſt we ſtate the Doctrine of the *Trinity*; for then we ſhall have gone a great way toward the Diſcovery of That of the *Incarnation*.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Holy Trinity.

IN All Queſtions (and eſpecially in this Nice one of the Holy *Trinity*) Confuſions and Diſſatisfactions ariſe from miſunderſtanding the *Terms*: I ſhall therefore firſt endeavour to Clear them from their Ambiguity.

A Council was Conven'd at *Alexandria*, on purpoſe to find ſome Cure for the then raging *Arian* Controverſie: It was then propoſed, That Both Parties ſhould forbear the Words οὐσία & ὑπόστασις, ſeeing the Former was not at all found in Scripture, nor the Latter, in ſuch a Sence as belong'd to the Queſtion in Diſpute. This were indeed a ſure way: Did we uſe no other Words, than what we meet with in Scripture, we ſhould eſcape Quarrelling about ſuch Niceties, as no Word in Scripture occaſions: But ſince it is not to be hop'd, that all Parties ſhould agree to ſuch a Propoſal, the *next* is, that in all Words which are Matter of Queſtion, we ſhould take away the Equivocation, which hinders us from a diſtinct Perception of the Meaning of the Adverſaries, and perhaps of our own Words. And here

here we may ſettle for a Rule, that Words which import Matter, muſt be Equivocal, when apply'd to things Immaterial. The Scripture (we ſee) plainly telleth us, that Chriſt is the *Only Begotten Son of God: Arius* thence inferred, that he could not be Co-eternal with the Father, but there muſt be a Time when he was not: Which Inference was plainly caus'd, by not conſidering, that the Word *Begotten*, when apply'd to a Spirit, muſt be Equivocal. Should we lay aſide this Word, or ſhould we endeavour to explain it by any *other*, yet ſhall we never be able to ſpeak ſo properly, but that there will be ſtill ſome Tincture of Matter, which may impoſe upon an unwary Underſtanding.

But when the Word is not found in Scripture, and the Tranſlation of it from one Language into another, is Equivocal too; then is there need of double Caution. It is frequent with the *Latin* Schools, to over-do in Tranſlating from the *Greek*, as we have experienc'd in both the Words now mention'd, which it will highly concern us to take notice of.

1. The Controverted Word οὐσία, which the Fathers in the Council of *Alexandria* would have laid aſide, and which literally importeth no more than *Beingneſs* (if I may make ſuch a Word) they have advanc'd to *Subſtance*; a Word ſo much apply'd to Matter, that ſome with great Confidence, deride it as a Contradiction, to ſay that a *Subſtance* can be *Immaterial*. The more we attend to our own Senſes, or *Ariſtotles* Predicaments, the more ſtrongly are our Minds poſſeſs'd, that *Subſtance* muſt be Material, and we find it very hard to ſharpen our Conceptions to ſuch Keenneſs, as to ſeparate them.

Dr. *Sherlock* tells us, that *we muſt not ſeek for any other Subſtance in God, but infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs*; and the School-Men themſelves, when in a wary Humour, inſtead of that Word, uſe the Word *Eſſence*, which as it more faithfully tranſlateth the *Greek*, ſo doth it better ſuit the Nature of a Spirit; and if it come ſhort of expreſſing God's *Beingneſs*, yet doth it not ſo much Misbeſeem it.

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2. The other Word ὑπόστασις is yet more Equivocally tranſlated, by the Word *Perſon*, which alſo is it ſelf Equivocal, even in *Latin*; for in Metaphiſicks, it ſignifieth a *Compleat Man*; in Grammer, a *Diſguiſe*; in Civil Affairs, a *Repreſentative*, or one Repreſented: For thus it is ſaid, a King is Honoured in the Perſon of his Ambaſſador; and St. *Paul* ſaith, *To whom I forgave any thing, in the Perſon of Chriſt forgave I it:* Sometimes it ſignifieth an *Officer*, or ſomething like it; ſo *Tully* ſaith, *Suſtineo unus tres Perſonas, Meam Adverſarii, Judicis.* And here again, thoſe who diſpute concerning it, in their wary Intervals, quit the Improper and Ambiguous Word, for another more ſuitable to the *Greek*, and to Reaſon. *Subſiſtence* more properly Tranſlateth ὑπόστασις, yet even here do they not ſtick; but from three Perſons ſink to three Proprieties, three Modifications, *&c.* and ſo run from one extream to another: For if the Word Perſon in its Metaphiſical Exaltation, carry the ſence too high, thoſe other bring it too low. If among ſo many different ſences, any will require an exact Account, I ſay, not of the *Word* only, but the *Notion*, we muſt not be aſham'd to confeſs that it is Incomprehenſible. Yea, on the contrary, ſhame will be due to thoſe, who at the ſame time profeſs this Myſtery to be Incomprehenſible, and yet require an exact Account of it.

And ſince of all the Terms therein uſed, *Perſon* is moſt Ambiguous and moſt Diſputed; therein eſpecially is required moſt Modeſty.

No man need to be aſham'd to be ignorant with the Learned and Orthodox Dr. *Wallis*, who in ſeveral Treatiſes, ſays and ſtands to it, that *Perſonality imports a Diſtinction; but what Diſtinction he cannot determine*: So there are three *Somewhats* which he cannot define, and which make one God. Could men of leſs Learning, learn this Modeſty; could we be as ſenſible, that the Word *Perſon*, in its Metaphiſical Heigth, is no leſs improperly applied to the ſecond Diſtinction in the Trinity, than the Word *Begotten*, is in its *Phyſical* Baſeneſs;

or

or (which is better) could we caſt away that improper Word and always ſpeak as the School-men themſelves ſometimes do, by the warier Words of *Subſiſtence*, *Propriety*, &c. we ſhould more eaſily ſatisfie our ſelves and others, how ſuch Three may be *One*.

But ſince 'tis not our Province to give Law to the World, concerning the Words whereby they ſhall expreſs their thoughts; but every man is allowed to diſtinguiſh an ambiguous Word, and take that Sence which is moſt ſuitable to the Nature of the *thing*, eſpecially if it be ſometimes ſo us'd by thoſe with whom he diſcourſeth; we may ſo retain the Words *Subſtance* and *Perſon*, as thereby to underſtand no more, than the School-Men themſelves interpret them by. And This taken for granted, we thus demonſtrate, that there are in the God-head, One Subſtance and Three Perſons.

I. That *GOD is a Being abſolutely Perfect*, is the Fundamental Principle of all Religion. That *Mind* is the moſt Perfect Being, is no leſs univerſally acknowledg'd: When our Mind is polluted, St. *Paul* exhorteth to renew it; and tells us, that it is *renewed in Knowledge after the Image of Him that created him.* This is the ſame with *Plato's* Νῦς, the *Original Being*, Derived from None, but Author of All, and therefore properly ſtiled the FATHER.

II. As *Mind* is the moſt Perfect *Being*, ſo the moſt *Perfect* Being muſt be a *Perfect* Mind. But an unthinking Mind cannot be a Perfect one: God therefore was never Unthinking. And ſince Thought is the Firſt and Proper Iſſue of a Thinking Mind; therefore may it moſt properly be ſtiled, *The Firſt Begotten Son*, and muſt be Co-eternal with the Father, becauſe the Father was never without him.

In our *Engliſh* we conform to the *Latin*, and becauſe in *that* Tongue, Mind is of the Feminine Gender, therefore inſtead of *Beget*, we ſay we *Conceive* in our Minds: yet ſtill the *Meta-*

phor is the ſame, either way Thought is the Iſſue of the Mind, and Word is no other than a Thought: A Thought is no leſs than a Word conceiv'd, and a Word is no more than a Thought *brought forth.*

But becauſe the Maſculine is more worthy than the Feminine, the Holy Scripture more properly ſtileth the Word, not the *Conceived*, but *Begotten Son.*

And ſince the Son muſt be of the ſame Nature with the Father; yea, ſince the Word is the ſame in Subſtance with the Mind, whence it iſſueth: Therefore, if the Mind be abſolutely *Perfect*, the Word muſt be abſolutely *Wiſe.* Λόγος equally ſignifieth *Word*, *Reaſon*, or *Wiſdom*; which alſo is our Saviours Title. And if in the Beginning of St. *John*'s Goſpel, Λόγος were ſo tranſlated, it would be no leſs agreeable to the *Greek*, and more ſo to our Saviours Dignity: ſince ordinarily, *Word* importeth a Tranſient Sound; but *Reaſon* or *Wiſdom*, a Permanent Perfection.

Thus have we found the Second Perſon, properly ſtiled the *Firſt Begotten of the Father*, Co-eternal with him, and in Time manifeſted.

III. The MIND or its WISDOM cannot be abſolutely Perfect, if they Do not, or Cannot *Perform:* They muſt be as Dead, if they have no Will; and they muſt be as Lame, if they want *Power* to Act: There muſt therefore be a Third Perſon, which the Holy Scripture ſtileth the *Holy Ghoſt*, which is conſtantly deſcribed by *Power* and *Action.*

The Angel in this Stile, delivered the Bleſſed Virgin from her Doubt of the Poſſibility of what he promiſed, *The* HOLY GHOST (ſaid he) *ſhall come upon thee, and the* POWER *of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee.* Our Lord in the ſame Stile, denounced unavoidable Damnation, to thoſe who perverted the Significancy of a Miracle; *He that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy Ghoſt, hath never Forgiveneſs, but is in danger of eternal Damnation, becauſe* (ſaith the Evangeliſt) *they ſaid he hath*

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an unclean Spirit. He bad his Apoſtles to tarry at *Jeruſalem*, till they ſhould be *endued with Power from on High*; when this was perform'd, *a mighty Wind ſhook the very Houſe*, Flames of Fire (the moſt active and powerful of Bodies) ſate upon their Heads, and inflam'd them with ſuch Raptures, that the By-ſtanders thought them drunk. When by their Miniſtry, new Diſciples receiv'd the Holy Ghoſt; *they ſpake with Tongues and propheſied*; that is, they were tranſported, as we may well collect from the Deſcription of *Saul's* Propheſying. In the *12th. Chapter* of the *Firſt* of the *Corinthians*, are enumerated many Supernatural Gifts, with this Elogy. *All theſe worketh, that one and the ſelf ſame Spirit, diſtributing to every one ſeverally as he will.* And in ſucceeding Ages, though ſuch Miraculous Gifts are ceas'd with their *Reaſon*, ſtill the ſelf ſame Spirit, by Motions proportionable to our preſent Needs, worketh our Wills to Sanctification.

Thus does the Light of Nature demonſtrate what St. *John* affirmeth, *There are Three that bear Witneſs in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt*; but what *kind* of Three, whether Perſons or Proprieties, or what other kind of Differences, we have no diſtinct, clear Notion, either from Reaſon or Revelation: Theſe *Three are One*, St. *John* alſo affirmeth, and Reaſon ſaith they muſt be ſo. For were not the *Word* the ſame with the *Mind*, it muſt be *falſe*; and were not the Action the ſame with the Mind and Word, it muſt be worſe than Reverence due to the Divinity, dares to expreſs. That every of theſe Three is God, is no leſs plain; otherwiſe he would be mixt, and conſequently have ſomething imperfect: Yet will it not follow, that becauſe every each Difference is God, and diverſe from the other Two, it muſt therefore be a diverſe God: For even in our ſelves, we have diverſe Faculties, which exceeding the Power of Animal Nature, may in a ſort be ſtiled *Man*; yet are they not *ſo many* Men.

If this way of Tracing the Myſtery of the *Holy Trinity*, agree to a Syllable, (as I doubt not it doth) with the Words

both of the Holy Scripture, and of the Church of *England*, and be more plainly both to be underſtood and prov'd, than that Magiſterial way vulgarly uſed, wherein Reaſon is not permitted to ſpeak; the Innovation may be (at leaſt) excuſed: Yet to thoſe who think otherwiſe I anſwer, that I advance nothing *new*, but only put the old Materials into another, and (I believe) a better Frame.

The Fathers and particularly (the Oracle of School-men) St. *Auſtin*, thus ſtate the Doctrine. *The Father is the Infinite Original Mind*; the Son, the Wiſdom of the Father, his *Image or Reflext knowledge of himſelf*; *the Holy Ghoſt, the Divine Love, wherewith the Father and Son love each other*: as is largely ſet forth by Dr. *Sherlock* in his Vindication; but *Auſtin's Hypotheſis* has theſe defects which *ours* eſcapeth.

1. It deſcribeth a God exactly *Epicurean*, wholly taken up with entertaining himſelf, without the leaſt glance upon any thing elſe.

2. The Second Perſon is ſaid to be a Reflection, which is quite another Idea, than that of a begotten Son, and carryeth a quite contrary Aſpect; the one importing a Return back to the Father, the other an Iſſuing out from him.

3. The third Perſon is ſaid to be Love, which is a perfection included in the firſt: for as it was Gods meer Goodneſs, which induced him to Communicate his Original Being; ſo doth the ſame Fatherly Goodneſs, induce him to love all thoſe Beings, whereof he hath ſo made himſelf a Father. Beſides, we have ſeen, and the more we examin, the more we ſhall ſee, that the Scripture maketh Power the proper Character of the Holy Ghoſt. Even his Title of Paraclete importeth the ſame: For in that Office, as he gave the Apoſtles power to work Miracles, ſo he did Chear and Strengthen their minds againſt Perſecutions.

4. This Hypotheſis ſeems to favor of *Sabellianiſm*, more than mine, as above explained.

We need great care in our Contemplations of God, to keep our minds from being ſeduced by what we ſee in the Material world; wherein,

wherein, becauſe everything is compounded of ſubſtance and Qualitys, therefore we can hardly avoid imagining God to be a *Subſtance* & his Perfections, Qualitys: But the more we conſider it, the more we ſhall be ſatisfied, that he is not to be Contemplated by his Perfections, in the Concrete, but the Abſtract. We have found S. *John* deſcribing him by *Light*, which hath heretofore been lookt on as a Quality, even by thoſe who doubt not the Son to be a Subſtance. Could we climb up to the Spiritual World, we might thence conceive, that Gods Perfections are in him, as light is in the Sun, and that it is no diſhonour to Him, to ſay, he hath no other ſubſtance, than thoſe Perfections, which to us ſeem Qualitys: But what they are in him, who is their Centre, we can no more conceive, than we could underſtand the Glorys of the Sun, if we had been Born and bred in a Dungeon: for as they are of a quite other Nature, they fall not ſhort, but much exceed, what ever the word *Subſtance* can import; as a Spirit is quite another, and much Perfecter Being, than a Body.

The more we conſider this, the leſs we ſhall ſtartle at the above recited words of Dr. *Sherlock*. *We muſt not ſeek for any other Subſtance in God, but Infinit Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs:* In which words by his inverting the order, wherein we deduced the Second Perſon from the Firſt, and the Third from Both; and Bringing no order of his own in ſtead of it, we are confirmed in the Truth of our Hypotheſis: ſince by naming the ſame Three Perſons, without the ſame reaſon, we muſt infer, that he found ſome other reaſon for it; and thence conclude, as ſtrongly as ſuch authority can draw, that as God hath no other Subſtance, ſo do theſe Three Comprehend all his Perfections.

Thus have I endeavoured with as much Simplicity as ſo *nice* a Subject will permit, to diſplay that Myſtery of the Trinity, which has been the trouble of all Ages ever ſince it was firſt diſputed. I have not advanc'd one Propoſition without warrant from the Scripture, the Church of *England*, the Fathers of the Church, and the beſt Champions for that Doctrine. And why may I not hope that the *Unitarians* will

will diſſent from not one of them, if taken in that ſence which their Terms freely offer. That important Propoſition of Dr. Sherlocks, *We muſt not look for any other ſubſtance in God, but Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs:* and that other of Dr. *Wallis, Perſonality maketh a difference, but what that difference is, I cannot determine*, will make ſuch a Syncretiſm, as may prevent that growing danger which *Socianiſm* is ſaid to threaten. None of them doubtleſs will deny, that there is in God *no other ſubſtance, but infinite Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs*; or that every one of theſe three is in God, ſo different from the other two, that no one of them can be ſaid to be *either* of the other two: or that every one of theſe is in God, or that every thing that is in God is God. They know that the Trinitarians ſay as freely as themſelves, that there are not three Gods, but one God: Nor indeed do they deny any one Propoſition which the Trinitarians affirm, but the Conſiſtency of one with another. They oppoſe it as a contradiction, that three Perſons can have one numerical Subſtance; which Propoſition, or any other, it is impoſſible to prove or diſprove, until both Parties be agreed upon a clear Idea of the two Terms, Subſtance and Perſon. It is impoſſible to end, and therefore in vain to begin, any diſpute, becauſe the Opponent cannot hit the Reſpondents mind, without a diſtinct knowledg of the meaning of his words. They therefore that will oppoſe what we ſay, that in God is, or can be, one Subſtance and Three Perſons, muſt firſt clearly underſtand (and agree with us too) what thoſe Words ſignifie in God, and how in God they differ from what they ſignifie in Man. If they will be quiet till that be done, we need not fear any danger from their diſputes.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Incarnation of our Lord.

IF in what I have ſpoken concerning the *Holy Trinity* I ſeem to Platoniſe, I may make this advantage of the Objection, That it is a good Plea againſt the *Atheiſts*, who accuſe that Myſtery as contrary to Reaſon, which Reaſon in *Plato* could diſcover. But of the Doctrine of the *Incarnation of the Son of God*, Reaſon could not make the leaſt Conjecture. This diſcovery is made to us onely by the Goſpel, and we receive it no leſs with wonder than with Faith; yet by Faith we receive it with the greateſt Confidence, becauſe the word of God ſpeaks it; and Reaſon, as it could not diſcover, ſo can it not Contradict it.

We have found three differences in the Godhead, which are called ſo many Perſons; and though we know not clearly what the word *Perſon* importeth, yet this we know, that each of the *three* ſo differeth from the *other two*, that it muſt be denyed to be either of them. Tho they make not three Gods, as *Peter*, *James* and *John*, are three Men, yet they are three Agents; and though they be never Separate, yet they have each their own Peculiar Acts: The Father *Sendeth*, the Son is *Sent*. St. *Paul* ſaith, that after the General Reſurrection, the Son's Government ſhall Ceaſe, *and himſelf be Subject, that God may be all in all*. And the Son himſelf ſaith *of that day, and hour, the Son knoweth not, but the Father Only*. Again, he ſo differeth from the *Holy Ghoſt*, as that he ſaith, *if I go not away the Comforter will not Come*. Tho in every one of theſe there be great Myſtery, yet is there no Contradiction; and what the Word of God hath plainly Reveal'd, Reaſon requires us not to Doubt of. What can be plainer than that ſaying of St. John, *The word became Fleſh and dwelt among us*? or thoſe words of St. Paul, *Great is the Myſtery*

Myſtery of Godlineſs, God was Manifeſt in the Fleſh: In him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead Bodily. He that Aſcended was the ſame alſo that Deſcended; which is the ſame with what himſelf ſaid, *No Man hath Aſcended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* Theſe, and ſeveral other words of Scripture ſo plainly ſpeak our Lord's Divinity, that whoever otherwiſe interprets them, will no leſs plainly Rob the Words of their Meaning, than Chriſt of his Honour.

And what is there in this wonderful Myſtery, which Reaſon cannot apprehend? The Holy Ghoſt, which by moving upon the Face of the Deep, Enabled the *Chaos* to bring forth the whole World, could not be leſs able ſo to *over ſhadow* a Virgin, as to Enable Her to bring forth a Holy Child. That to the thus Divinely Begotten Child, the Second Perſon, the *Word*, ſhould ſo Intimately, Vitally, and every way Perfectly, Unite himſelf, as to Exalt his Actions, and Sufferings to an infinite Merit, and make it no leſs impoſſible for him to Sin or Err, than for God himſelf ſo to do; as it is more Honourable to Chriſt, and more agreeable to the words of Scripture, ſo it is more Conſonant to Reaſon, than the *Socinian* Hypotheſis, which affirmeth him to be God, but made ſo of a Creature, and in time; whether That time Commenced before the Creation of the World, or his Coming into it, or his Departure from it.

This Hypotheſis carried the inference further than *Socinus* himſelf durſt follow it; for he had no ſmall trouble with ſome of his Diſciples, that denyed it Lawful to Worſhip or Invoke the Uneternal God. And why *Socinus* himſelf who Contended for his Worſhip, ſhould alſo contend againſt his Eternity, I can ſee no great Reaſon: For which way ſoever we look, we find the difference either too ſmall to diſturb the quiet of the world, or leſs Eligible on the *Socinians* ſide. If we conſider the thing it ſelf, it appeareth much more Credible, that the Eternal Son of God, ſhould deſcend to the Nature of Man, than that a Man ſhould be made God, indued with a new Omnipreſence to Hear, and Omnipotence

nipotence to Grant, the prayers of all the Supplicants, that in all places of the World ſhould invoke him. If we regard the Dignity of the Perſon, it is plainly more Honourable to believe him God the Creator, than a Creature Deified. If we conſider the Fruits, our Thankſulneſs muſt be greater, our Love more inflam'd, our Obedience more quickned, our Hatred to ſin more ſharpn'd, and all the good ends of Faith more promoted: ſo that upon All accounts, were the Scripture ſo Doubtful as to leave us to our Choice, we ought rather to carry our Biaſs *Towards* our Lord's Eternal Divinity, than Againſt it.

BUT what ſhall we ſay to Thoſe now mention'd, that altogether deny our Saviours Deity, and dare not Worſhip or Invoke him at all? To ſuch, as I heartily Wiſh a better Faith, ſo I dare not in charity deny the Name of Chriſtians, or Hope of Salvation.

That in the firſt Planting of the Chriſtian Religion, many were Admitted into the Church upon ſo mean a degree of belief, as is *theſe* Mens, Reaſon will perſwade us; and the Scripture it ſelf Inform us. St. *Paul* finding Diſciples at *Epheſus*, that *had not ſo much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghoſt*; that had only been Baptiz'd into *Johns* Baptiſm, told them no more of Chriſt but *this*, that *John indeed Baptiz'd with the Baptiſm of Repentance, ſaying unto the People, that they ſhould believe on him that ſhould come after him, that is, on Jeſus Chriſt: When they heard this, they were Baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and when* Paul *had Laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came upon them, and they ſpake with Tongues, and Propheſi'd.* When the *Ethiopian Eunuch* believ'd *that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God*, of whom *Iſaiah* Propheſi'd, *Philip* immediately Admitted him to Baptiſm. At one Sermon *three thouſand* became Diſciples: Can any Man Imagin that All theſe underſtood The whole Myſtery of the Incarnation? In the next ſucceeding Ages, the Churches of Chriſt had more leiſure to make their Enquirys, and accordingly made greater Progreſs: Yet in *Juſtin* Mar-

tyr's time, though they generally believ'd the Godhead of of Chriſt, they did not Deny thoſe to be Chriſtians, who could not come up to it. For we find That good Father willing thus to compound his Controverſie with *Tryphon* the *Jew*; *Though* (ſaith he) *I ſhall not prove that Chriſt is God, otherwiſe than by proving that this is the Chriſt, and that it was foretold that he ſhould be ſuch; yet it will be juſt, that thou ſhouldſt believe me to be deceiv'd in that one Point, and yet not deny that this is the Chriſt, tho' he ſeem to be a Man born of Men, and ſaid to be choſen to be Chriſt: For there are ſome (my Friends) among us, who profeſs him to be the Chriſt, and affirm him to be Man born of Men; with whom indeed I do not agree, nor will many ſpeak ſo, who are of the ſame Opinion with me.* The ſame Charity is ſtill due in proportion to the Means, that every Man hath, and the Sincerity of his Endeavours to improve them. Though the Learned after ſo much Time and Study, have obtained greater Degrees of Knowledge, yet it is ſtill acknowledg'd, that the Poor who want Opportunity, and Idiots, who have not Capacity, are not oblig'd to an Explicit Belief, of what they have no means to underſtand; yea, and thoſe that have means, are excuſable, if they ſo far enquire, as may juſtify their Sincerity, in the Search of Truth, though they miſs of it: The moſt rigid Cenſurers, provided they will regard Equity, cannot ſentence ſuch Men to a worſe Condemnation, than to level them with thoſe Ideots, whom themſelves pronounce excuſable. Both the one and the other miſs of the Truth with this only Difference, that the One *uſe* no endeavours to find it, the Others *neglect* none: And what Equity can there be in Condemning Men only for their being unſucceſsful in their moſt ſincere and diligent Endeavours?

This is intended as a Charitable Plea, for thoſe who may without their own default, fail in ſearch of ſome important Truths, ſuch as is the Queſtion now in hand, *Whether Chriſt be to be worſhip'd as God, or not?* Which is far from a meer Nicety, but of great Importance towards payment of our Duty: But This

This once acknowledg'd, Curioſity in diſputing concerning the Mode or Circumſtances of Chriſt's Eternal Generation, hath ever been condemn'd, even by thoſe Fathers and other Pious Men, who have been the moſt zealous Aſſerters of his Divinity. And ſuch was the great Queſtion, which for many Ages tormented the Chriſtian World in the *Arian* Controverſie, which ſeem'd of no great Importance at its firſt Riſe, till afterward it acquir'd a new and unreaſonable Value, from the Price which it coſt by long and fierce Contentions.

Both Parties acknowledg'd our Lord *to be God of God, Light of Light:* But *Arius* could not apprehend, how it could otherwiſe be, but if the Son be *Begotten*, there muſt be ſome Moment before he was ſo; and afterward, he could not underſtand how the Son could be of the *ſame* Subſtance, though he willingly confeſſed him to be of *like* Subſtance with the Father.

This Controverſie, which at firſt appeared *no bigger than a Mans hand*, grew ſo Great and Black, as to fill the World with Long and Bloody Storms; for Prevention whereof, the Great and Wiſe Emperor *Conſtantine*, by the moſt eſteemed of his Biſhops, ſent a Gracious Letter, Perſwading, yea Requeſting the Heads of both Parties to Silence; which had it been obey'd, would more effectually have Ended the Diſpute, than the many Councils which afterward were Convened to decide it.

In this Letter he condemneth Both Parties as Obſtinate, and the Queſtion it ſelf as Fooliſh; which he preſſeth no leſs than *eight* or *nine* Times. How juſtly, we may diſcover in Three Particulars.

I. It is Unſerviceable to our Lord's Deſign.

II. Fruitleſs to the Enquirers own Purpoſe.

III. Dangerous.

CHAP. IX.

Of Inquiſitiveneſs in Queſtions, concerning our Lord's Incarnation.

I. *IT is Unſerviceable to our Lord's Deſign:* For as the Sun, could we ſuppoſe it an intelligent Being, would not *come out of his Chamber, and run his Race* round the World, only to gain to himſelf a ſmall Reflexion of his Light from Pools of Water, or for any leſs Reaſon, than thereby to benefit the World; ſo neither did *the Day Spring from on high viſit us*, for any other Gain, but that of delight, to ſee us happy. Whoever thinks otherwiſe, will thereby more effectually deny his Godhead, than ever any Heretick did. And therefore we ſhall think moſt diſhonourably of Him, ſhould we ſuppoſe that he will deny the Salvation, which with his Blood he hath purchaſed to all of Mankind, but only thoſe very few, who believe the whole Truth concerning the Divinity of his Perſon; as if he came into the World, on purpoſe to purchaſe ſuch a Belief, and could deny the Benefit to thoſe who believe as much as his own Declaration or Service made Needful.

And what is ſo Needful, himſelf hath moſt Clearly Revealed, *John* 12. *v.* 35. *Walk while ye have the Light —— while ye have the Light, believe in the Light.* If any Paraphraſe can make the Words clearer, it muſt be ſuch as this, *Your Life is a Journey, and you are in darkneſs: Follow my Directions, and be confident that in the end, you ſhall not miſs of the Happineſs you travel for.*

There are Two ſorts of ways, whereby the Sun is viewed: The honeſt ſimple *Traveller*, without any curious Diſquiſitions into his *Magnitude*, *Height*, *Motions*, *Texture*, &c. with equal Induſtry and Confidence, guides his Steps by his Light: The Learned *Aſtronomer* ſits him down and Calculates, how many times

times the Sun is bigger than the Earth, how much above it, &c.

Grant now, that in this great Queſtion concerning our *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, the Truth on One ſide being no leſs certain, than the Aſtronomers Demonſtrations, and the Errour on the Other ſide, no leſs groſs than the dull Conceits of the Clown; yet we cannot deny, that the ignorant induſtrious Traveller, better anſwereth the Deſign for which the Sun ſhines, and better advances himſelf in his Journey.

II. A Second Evidence of the Folly of ſuch an Enquiry, is this, *That it is Fruitleſs towards the Enquirers own Satisfaction.* This by the good Emperour was preſs'd in theſe Words, *How few are there, that exactly enough diſcern, or worthily enough expreſs, the Force of Matters ſo weighty and abſtruſe; or if there be any one who believeth he can ſo do, how few are there among the Multitude, whom he can enable to underſtand it?* This alſo is livelier repreſented in our Lords Emblem: The Brightneſs of the Sun to the Traveller, plainly ſheweth his way; but if look't upon with a fixt and ſteady View, will ſhew the Gazer nothing but the weakneſs of his Eyes: And the Light of the Goſpel to a Faithful Believer, ſheweth ſo much of our Lords Divinity, as muſt make him truſt in his Promiſes, and obey his Commands: But if we will nicely enquire into all Particulars, we ſhall find our Underſtandings no leſs confounded by the Glory of the Myſtery, than our Eyes are by That of the Sun. And of this the Holy Ghoſt ſeemeth to warn us, by ſeveral Types and Propheſies. The Inſcrutability of his Generation, was ſo known a Character of the *Meſſiah*, that the *Jews* thence derived an Objection; *We know this Man whence he is; but when Chriſt cometh, no Man knoweth whence he is:* And in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *Melchiſedeck* is at large proved to be his Type; particularly in this, that he was *without Father, without Mother, and without Deſcent.* Two Evangeliſts trace his Genealogy; but as they derive it, not from his Real, but Suppoſed Father; ſo do they take two ſeveral ways: The Difference, 'tis true, is reconciled by the

the Learned; and the Suppoſed Father ſatisfied the *Jews*; but this doth not make it very clear to *us*, how he was the Son of *David*; which therefore, that we might more fully believe, we needed the Apoſtles Authority. And this ſo obſcure ſhewing us his Generation, *according to the Fleſh*, may be a Warning againſt Inquiſitiveneſs into the Particulars of the Eternal Generation of his Divinity.

But Licouriſhneſs after forbidden Fruit, is the *Original Sin*, which all the Sons of *Eve* have derived from her: And the Chriſtian World hath inherited both the Sin and Puniſhment. Firſt nicely curious in enquiring into our SAVIOURS *Eternal Generation*; and then entangled in many other Queſtions, the Chief whereof is thus deſcribed, (*As we plainly find by ſeveral Epiſtles, which after the Council, Biſhops wrote to one another*) The Word [*Conſubſtantial*] *grievouſly troubled ſome of their Minds: In ſifting whereof, while they ſpent much Time and Pains, and too nicely endeavoured to deſcribe its Force, they raiſed among themſelves an inteſtine War; and what they did, differed nothing from Fighting in the dark; for they ſeemed not at all to underſtand, why they railed at each other.* And that when they were Aſſembled in Council, they underſtood it no better, may appear, not only by their various Confeſſions, which were made by ſeveral Councils, (whereof *Socrates* reckoneth no leſs than *Nine*) or the contrary Determinations of ſeveral Counter-Councils, (who Condemn'd each other as the Emperours chanc'd to influence them) but by the wavering of the very ſame Council: For That of *Sirmium* framed two or three, one whereof they fain would have retracted, and laboured with all their Might, to call in all its Copies.

The School-Men in Later Ages, have found it neceſſary to State the Doctrine otherwiſe than the Council of *Nice*, which even thoſe which ſubſcribed, did not ſo underſtand, as to be ſatisfied; *Neſtorius*, and with *him* many others, Aſſerted that the Bleſſed Virgin ought not to be ſtyl'd the *Mother of God*; and if it appeared not by his expreſs words, yet from that Aſ-

ſertion

ſertion it was infer'd, that he believ'd Chriſt to have *Two Perſons:* This raiſed Diſſentions over all the Eaſtern Churches, ſo like thoſe which iſſued from the *Mother* Queſtion, that another Hiſtorian deſcribed them in the very ſame words: *Men Fought as in the dark, now one way, and then another: And what they Aſſerted, they immediately deny'd.*

Eutyches, on the other hand, Aſſerted that the Divine Nature ſwallowed up the Humane, ſo that however before Conjunction they had been two, yet *after* it, they were but one.

After this the *Patriarch* of *Conſtantinople*, and Biſhop of *Jeruſalem* Diſagreed in a puzling Queſtion, wherein the Emperour had been Tos'd from ſide to ſide, and therefore publiſhed an Edict, forbidding Men to Aſſert, *Either that there is One or Two Wills and Actions in Chriſt:* Yet his Grand-Son called a Council, which Aſſerted Two Wills, and Anathematiz'd them who Aſſerted but One.

Thus have we Pointed (and only pointed) at ſome of the Many Entangling Queſtions, which confounded and divided the ſubtileſt Wits of ſeveral Ages: and who is he that is not diſcourag'd from ſearching into ſuch Puzling Myſteries? Who can moderate between the Patrons, and the Adverſaries of Conſubſtantiality, Or between the Patrons themſelves? Or again, between the firſt Patrons, and the School-Men; That ſuch a work is not Neceſſary, appears in that the *Poor*, that is the Greateſt, and perhaps the Beſt, part of the World, may be ſaved without it: And now we find it impoſſible to be Accompliſh'd by the greateſt Clerks.

That we acquieſce in the Determinations of Councils, will certainly be our Wiſdom; if not for the Reaſons, which moved them ſo to deſide, yet for *that* whereupon the Great *Conſtantine* would have perſwaded to Stifle ſuch needleſs Endleſs diſputes.

III. His third Argument againſt diſputing ſuch Queſtions was this, that it is *Dangerous*.

He

He that looks upon the Face of the Sun with a fix'd, and ſteady view, doth worſe than Loſe his Labour: For he Hurteth his Eye. Yea ſome have deſtroyed thereby their ſights. *He that Pryeth into the Myſtery, ſhall be Oppreſſed with the Glory*, is a known Aphoriſme. He that boldly Aſſerteth any thing concerning it, runneth himſelf upon Danger; ſo much the greater, by how much Higher the matter of the Queſtion is, and more difficult to be comprehended.

Of this double-danger the Good Emperour gave this Warning; *We ought to reſtrain our ſelves from* talking, leſt we cannot ſufficiently explain the *Queſtion*, or our Hearers cannot ſufficiently Underſtand our *Meaning*; either way the People be driven upon a Neceſſity of *Blaſphemy* or *Contention*:

1. Concerning the danger of *Blaſphemy*, thus ſpeaks an Hiſtorian; *After the Council of Nice had determined it, the Biſhops began to diſagree among themſelves, while they too Curiouſly Examined the word* ὁμοούσιον: *For one ſide thought thoſe who uſed That Word, ſpoke Blaſphemy, as thinking the Son to have no ſubſtance of his own; and the other ſide accuſed thoſe who thought otherwiſe, and Hated them as Heathens, becauſe they brought in the Worſhip of other Gods.* On Either ſide great danger of *Error*, and on Both ſides not Danger only, but Certainty of,

2. *Uncharitableneſs*, worſe than Both. For neither were thoſe guilty of *Heatheniſm*, who believed but One God; nor theſe of *Blaſphemy*, who thought the Son Equal with the Father: But Both ſides were guilty of *Uncharitableneſs*, in Charging the Adverſary with a Crime, whereof he was not Guilty; Mutually Treating each other with the Cruelty of Perſecutors who Covered Men with Skins of Beaſts, and then baited them.

Self-Love is a great Deceiver: Firſt it deceiveth us into a belief, that the Opinion which is dear to *Us*, is no leſs ſo to *God*; and then, into a Conceit, that *Fondneſs* for our Opinion is *Zeal* for God: If *God* or *Chriſt*, be named in it, That name Conſecrateth the whole Propoſition into a matter of Faith, though no other Term in it be worthy to be joyned with That Holy one.

The

The diſpute was not, whether Chriſt were God, for Both ſides agreed that he *is Very God of Very God:* But, whether he be of the *Same ſubſtance with the Father*, which neither ſide underſtood. Both believed God Concerned, becauſe he was Named in the Queſtion: But they did not Examine whether his Honour and Service were not more Advanced by Modeſt Silence, then by Fierce Contention: Nor Conſider how hard it is to keep Contention within Bounds. For the Champions of any Opinion, while they labour to promote it, make it a Publick Quarrel; And then it is great Odds, but Intereſt will intrude, and make it Irreconcilable.

Thus was it in *this* Controverſy; from a Diſpute between a Biſhop and his Presbyter, it Grew to a Conteſt between Imperial, and Eccleſiaſtical Authority; and the Biſhop of *Rome*, ſo Fiſh'd in the troubled Waters, as to draw to his See a power over all the Chriſtian World.

Nor was *this* the only inſtance Pope; *Leo* procured of the Emperour a General Council, at the Receſs whereof, this Queſtion was propos'd: *Do you agree with Dioſcorus, who ſaith, that Chriſt Conſiſteth of two Natures; or with* Leo, *who ſaith, there are Two Natures in Chriſt:* The difference between theſe two is not ſo eaſie to underſtand, as was That between *Leo* and *Dioſcorus*. Yet was the Anſwer of the Council Satisfactory: For they Cryed *they believed Leo, and held for Eutychians all that contradicted him.* So Leo, under pretence of a Nice Queſtion, obtained his Revenge againſt *Dioſcorus*, and the Advancement of his own See by this Glorious Sentence, *Therefore the moſt Holy, and moſt Bleſſed Arch-Biſhop of the Great and Ancient Rome*, Leo, *by us and the preſent Council, and the Bleſſed and ever to be praiſed* Peter, *who is the Rock and Baſis of the Catholick Church, hath deprived him*, &c. Whether we believe with the *Latine* Church, that the Holy Ghoſt proceedeth *from the Father and the Son*, or with the Greek Church, *From the Father By the Son*, what will be the great difference? Yet is this made *Matter*, or rather *Colour*, for a Schiſm; which to decide, a Council was Conven'd at

Florence, where the Real Design appear'd to be, not the Establishment of Truth, but the Subjection of the *Greek* Church to the *Romans*.

These, among many others, are Visible and Lamentable Examples of the Mischief's, which follow our advancing Niceties, first to Matters of *Dispute*, and then to matters of *Faith*. Our Lord's Honour is only so far concerned in them, as to be Exposed to more Dangers than one: Especially That of Destroying them for whom he dyed; But no way Advanced in Recompence for such Mischiefs.

CHAP. X.

Of the Word or Matter which is the Object of FAITH.

WE have said enough (have we not said too much?) of *what* Faith is required to be paid to the PERSON *in Whom* we must *Believe:* Proceed we now to the WORD or Matter, *Which* we must Believe upon the *Credit of the Person.*

The *Romanists* from the many Disagreements among the Reformed, inferr a Necessity of Submitting our Understandings to the Dictates of the Church: We, beside Recrimination (which is a Plea Sufficient, but not Honourable) answer, that we disagree not in matters *Fundamental.* They demand a Catalogue, and did they do it sincerely, Charity would joyn with them in Requiring a plain and Satisfactory Account: But as long as they profess to believe all the Determinations of their Council of *Trent*, as so many Articles of Faith; it is plain that any Catalogue which should be offered them, would do them no other service, but to be cast as a bone of Contention among the Reformed, who according to the Largeness or Straightness of their minds,

minds', would judge More or Fewer Articles Fundamental.

Our incomparable Dr. *Hammond* inſtead of a *Catalogue* giveth us a *Character.* For in an Expreſs Treatiſe he proveth, that the Word *Fundamental* is Relative! That *Faith* is to be a Foundation for *Holineſs*; and therefore any Doctrine is juſt ſo far *Fundamental* as it ſerveth to Advance *Holineſs.* This is indeed a great Truth, but ſo inſufficient for a Teſt, that you ſhall hardly meet with any Controverted Doctrine, whoſe Champions on both ſides lay not Claim to it.

Will it not be more Satisfactory, as it is more Grammatical, to turn the Relation the other way, and call That Fundamental, which is either *Part* of the Foundation, or *Fixed* to it? Concerning the *Perſon* on whom we are to build, nothing can be plainer than what the Apoſtle writeth to the Corinthians. 1 *Cor.* 3. 11. *Other Foundation can no Man Lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt.* And as to the *Matter* which muſt be Believed upon Faith in *This Perſon*, we find the ſame Apoſtle ſpeak to the ſame ſenſe in behalf of the *Reſurrection.* May we not then apply to Theſe Two, the Words of our Saviour concerning the *Two great Commandments of the Law?* The *Firſt* is the Great *Foundation*, and the *Second is like unto it, upon Theſe two are Built*, and in Them are Contained, all *the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith.* It is plain All thoſe of the *Apoſtles Creed* are ſo. For the Former and much Greater part thereof Relates to our Lord's *Perſon*, till we come to *That* concerning the *Holy Ghoſt*, which cannot be ſeparated from it in our Belief, ſeeing himſelf joyned it in *Baptiſm*; which he required to be performed *in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt.* Then, after the *Holy Catholick Church*, all the *other* Articles Relate to the *Reſurrection.* That the Church of *England* owneth the Belief of *this Creed* to be ſufficient for Salvation, appeareth in that ſhe requireth no other Confeſſion of Faith, for Admiſſion either of a Child to Baptiſm, or a Sick Perſon to Abſolution. Why then ſhould we be aſhamed or afraid, to offer *This Creed*, either to Friend or

Foe, for our Catalogue of Fundamentals? Yea, how can we for ſhame deny it to be ſuch?

Thus far we are ſafe; but our Adverſaries will not be ſo ſatisfied: for to ſpeak properly, they demand not ſo truly a *Catalogue*, as an *Explication* of Fundamentals: And now we muſt take the Apoſtle's Caution, *Take heed what we build.* The Danger is double, Firſt, leſt by Miſtake of Falſhood for Truth, we fall into *Errour*; and then, leſt through Fondneſs to our Opinions, we run into *Contention.* And this Latter is indeed the greater Danger of the Two: For we are very apt to over-value what we take for *Truth*, and to impoſe it upon others for Matter of *Faith.* There are few Errours ſo Miſchievous as *this*; yea, without *this*, few Errours would be miſchievous at all: and therefore it muſt needs anſwer our Labour, if we carefully ſet the juſt Bounds between a *True Doctrine*, and an *Article of Faith*, i. e. *Such a Doctrine whoſe Belief is neceſſary to entitle us to Chriſts Promiſe of Eternal Life.*

The Qualifications for ſuch Matter of Faith muſt be principally theſe:

1. It muſt be *Eaſie to be underſtood by the meaneſt Capacity. To the Poor the Goſpel was preached*, and by ſuch it muſt be Underſtood, that it may be Believed. Beſide plain Juſtice, which will not reap where it hath not ſown; beſide what we have heard from the Apoſtle, that the *Light of the Goſpel cannot be hid but to thoſe whoſe Eyes* are not only Dimm'd, but quite *Blinded*; and of his Jealouſie, leſt the *Corinthians* minds *ſhould be corrupted from the Simplicity which is in Chriſt*; beſide theſe and other Evidences, it is worth Obſervation, that the ſame Apoſtle in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, wherein he diſputeth againſt the *Jews*, in behalf of the *Righteouſneſs which is by Faith*, as oppoſed to *that which is by the Law*, is careful to prevent any Conceit, that the Matter of Faith was more Obſcure than that of the Law: and therefore *ch.* 10. *v.* 9. *&c.* he reciteth the ſaying of *Moſes*, Deut. 30. 12. applying it to Faith in Chriſt. No Height, nor

nor Depth, nor Diſtance of any kind putteth it out of Reach; it is not only in our Eye, but in our Mouth. And to put the Truth beyond Suſpicion, in the *9th. Verſe*, he gives us a plain Account both of Perſon and Matter; *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved; and this* (ſaith he) *is the Word of Faith which we preach.* By which, and the following Words it is plain, that Apoſtle was ſo far from thinking it an Honour, that he judged it a great Defect, if there were any Difficulty in Matter of Faith.

It is true, he ſpeaketh with much amazedneſs in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, of a great Myſtery, which (yet) though it ſeemed hard to him to be Believed, is eaſie enough to be Underſtood; for it ſignified only this, That the *Gentiles* were Fellow-Heirs of the Promiſes with the *Jews*. And when he inſtructeth *Timothy* how to behave himſelf in the houſe of God, he telleth him of the *great Myſtery of Godlineſs*, which concerneth only the *Perſon* to be beliieved in, but not the *Matter* to be believed upon Credit of That Perſon. And in no other word of Scripture do we meet the leaſt Intimation of any *boaſt* or *confeſſion*, that Faith hath any hard Task for the Underſtanding to perform.

2. It muſt be *an Expreſs Word of God:* ſo ſaith the Apoſtle in the *17th.* Verſe, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* And ſo ſaith the very Nature of Faith: It is *Juſtice* to God's Veracity, and therefore can have nothing to do, where there is no *Word* to which Belief may be due.

It muſt not be denied, but plain Reaſon is another Word of God; and therefore what That inferreth by inconteſtable Conſequence from a written Word, muſt be received with a Belief equal to the Evidence of That Conſequence: But if the relation between the Written Word, and Rational Conſequence be ſo remote, that none but a skilful Herauld can derive its Pedigree; Then is a good Chriſtian no more obliged to believe ſuch an Inference, than is every good Subject to be a good Herauld.

That

That our Lord trebled his Command upon St. *Peter*, *to feed his Lambs*, we believe with utmoſt aſſurance, becauſe we find it in the written Word; and thence infer that he gave him Authority and Power to *Preach the Goſpel*, inſtead of his former Employment in *Fiſhing*; becauſe plain Reaſon informeth us, that he could not otherwiſe perform the Office of a good *Shepherd*; but that he thereby Commiſſioned, not only St. *Peter* in Perſon, But All his Succeſſors in the *See* of *Rome*, to Rule All Perſons and Nations, that in All Ages ſhall be of Chriſt's flock, with as Abſolute Power, as a Shepherd doth his Sheep, and that All the Flock muſt obey him with the ſame Tameneſs, as the Sheep do their Shepherd; This can therefore be no Matter, either of Faith or Reaſon, becauſe the Conſequence is beyond the kenn of any Eye or Teleſcope.

3. Matter of Faith, properly ſo called, muſt not only be expreſly revealed, but *Expreſly honoured with the Promiſe of Eternal Life to the Believer.* For though All God's Words be Equally (becauſe Infinitely) *True*; yet are not All, equally *Goſpel*. Inſtances of this Nature are too many to be mentioned. We muſt therefore carefully diſtinguiſh between what is *Written*, and what is *Goſpel:* and remember that to the *Goſpel* only, and not to any Other Truth, was given the Promiſe, *Mar.* 16. 15. *Go ye into all the World, and preach the GOSPEL to every Creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* It is to the Goſpel, and to the Goſpel alone; that this Saving and Damning Power is given by our Saviour; and therefore whoever aſcribeth it to any other Doctrine, however True, yea however Revealed, maketh himſelf Equal to Chriſt in Authority, ard Superiour in Faithfulneſs: Equal in Power, by Granting or Denying Salvation, without any Warrrant from Him; and Superiour in Faithfulneſs, by diſcovering ſome Way to Salvation, and ſome Danger of Damnation, which our Lord left undiſcovered, and conſequently leaving every ſincere Believer in danger to periſh without

without Fault. For then, whoever doubt or disbelieve any of the Additionals, though they believe all that our Lord hath required, as abſolutely neceſſary to be believed, and whatſoever they know he hath revealed (which are no ſmall nor mean part of Chriſtians) muſt periſh, for ſtraying from the Faith, only for want of a faithful Shepherd: which is a Conceit more blaſphemous againſt our gracious Redeemer, than *Cerinthus*, *Marcion*, or any other Heretick ever entertained.

And here I cannot but repeat my former Complaint, That in the midſt of ſuch hot Diſputes concerning the very Principles of our Religion, the moſt Obvious and moſt Important Remarks are Neglected. Nothing can be more *Obvious*, *Important*, or *Neglected*, than this plain *Matter of Fact*: There are *Some Truths offered to our Belief*, by our Lord and his Apoſtles, *With a Promiſe annexed*, and others *without* any ſuch Promiſe. And from this Undeniable and Unavoidable Truth, theſe Corollaries will force themſelves upon us.

1. *There can be no need of a Determiner of Doubts concerning Matters of Faith.* For if thoſe Words of Scripture, which inform us of what is *Neceſſary to be believed*, be ſo Plain and ſo often Repeated, that no Man can miſs their true Meaning, then every Mans own Faculties are ſo far infallible, as to put him out of danger: and if any Other Word of Scripture be Doubtful, there is no harm if it remain ſo ſtill. But if any, out of mere Love to Truth, ſincerely labour to find it out in all its Corners; his Endeavours will be accepted, and his Miſtakes (if he fall into any) will be Pardoned.

2. *The Scriptures cannot be denied to be Sufficient*, though they may have ſuffered the common Fate of all Long-liv'd Books, by Careleſneſs of Copiers, Fraud of Hereticks, or Duſt of Time.

Many of the Apoſtles Writings (doubtleſs) are loſt; but That hindereth not the ſufficiency of thoſe which we enjoy: yea, if all the reſt of the Scripture were loſt, but only *thoſe Texts*, which proclaim thoſe Truths, to the Belief whereof Eternal

Life

Life is promiſed; Thoſe few Texts would be ſufficient to our Attaining it. Nor doth this ſlaken our obligation to his Faithfulneſs, for the Reſt: For as it is in Temporals, ſo it is in Spirituals; God's bounty is not Meaſured by our bare Neceſſities. He is *Rich towards us*, ſupplying us not only with Neceſſaries, but Conveniences; Not only *Bread of Life* to keep us from periſhing, but many *other* Truths to Feaſt our Curioſities; wherein (yet) as in *Corporal* Repaſts, he Requireth Sobriety.

3. *We Need not, Ought not, to Condemn any who differ from us in other Doctrines, to the belief whereof the Promiſe is not Appropriate*; if they Agree with us in thoſe to which it is ſo, and live accordingly. We are ſure, that they are *Heirs with us of the ſame Promiſe*; and if we Hate thoſe who Love God, and therefore are by him Beloved; ſuch Uncharitableneſs is a far greater Errour, and a greater Crime, than their Miſtakes in doubtful things can be.

4. And, which is now in our Eye, *There can be no need of a Catalogue of Fundamentals*, becauſe the Scripture hath particularly Enumerated the Truths that are Neceſſary to be believed.

Did not our Eyes Compel us to it, we ſhould hardly think it poſſible, that any who had the leaſt acquaintance with the *N. T.* could avoid the Diſcovery of ſo plain a Truth. When we therein find a Doctrine Treated like *Mordecai*, with a Proclamation before it, *Bow the Knee, Thus it ſhall be done to the Truth which the Lord Delighteth to Honour*; and others Expreſſed without any Mark of Honour; how can we judge *theſe* Neceſſary to Salvation? I mean if they be not in *their own Nature* ſo; as are the plain Truths of *Natural Religion*. Should *Ahaſuerus*'s Officers have ſuffered *others* to Ride in the ſame Royal Robes with *Mordecai*, had not *this* been a leſſening of *his* Honour, and an Act of Diſobedience to the *KING*? And would not the *GAVALCADE* have

have been ſo much the more Criminal, by how much it had been greater? How comes it then to paſs, that Thoſe Truths which our Lord hath exalted above All others with the like Singular Honour, ſhould be levelled with *thoſe*, which are ſo far from any ſuch Marks of his Favour, as to be left Unregarded, and diſputable, whether they be Truths or no; or how to be underſtood?

I know no way to unriddle ſo ſtrange a *Phænomenon*, but by that common ſaying, *Inter Arma ſilent Leges*. There hath been ſo much diſputing about Queſtions, that we have not heeded things Unqueſtionable; though That would as certainly bring Peace to our Minds, as the Laws would to the State, when troubled, if they might be paid their due.

Thoſe who are forbidden the Uſe of their Bibles, are excuſable; but thoſe who dare *read* them, muſt needs think themſelves obliged to *Search the Scriptures, for in them they think they have eternal Life, and they are they which teſtifie of the Doctrines which contein the Promiſe of it.*

The Task is every way very Eaſie; it will require very little Pains, and no Art. The meaneſt Beggar in the ſtreet underſtood the King's mind concerning *Mordecai*; and ſo may any the moſt Unlearned Man, that will heed, what are thoſe Truths which are honoured with a Proclamation of Eternal Life.

We have already obſerved, that the Apoſtle plainly told the Romans, *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe with thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* We again meet the ſame more pompouſly proclaimed, 1 *Cor.* 15. *I declare unto you the Goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo you have received, and wherein you ſtand, by which alſo you are ſaved, if you keep in Memory what I preached unto you, if you have not believed in vain, That Chriſt dyed for our ſins, according to the Scriptures, and that he roſe again according to the Scriptures.*

It will be objected, that This cannot be the Faith which our Lord ſo importunately called for, becauſe this was not perform-

ed till after the Time of his Preaching was paſt: Let us obſerve *Mar.* 16. 14. *He appeared to the eleven as they ſate at meat, and upbraided them with their Unbelief and hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen: and he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature, He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* The Command coming in the ſame breath with the Reproof, ſheweth that the Goſpel which they muſt Preach, was the ſame which themſelves had been ſo backward in Believing. And *Luk.* 24. 46. his Reſurrection and his Promiſe are made the Fundamental Points of Faith; *For he ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe again from the Dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations; and ye are Witneſſes of theſe things.*

That the Apoſtles took the laſt of theſe Words for the ſumm of their Commiſſion, appeareth by what they ſaid and did after the death of *Judas*, Act. 1. 21. *Wherefore of theſe Men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among us, —muſt one be ordained to be a Witneſs with us of his Reſurrection.* And accordingly throughout the reſt of that Book, do we always find them inſiſt upon This, as the Main of their Buſineſs.

In the former half of theſe Words, doth our Lord argue it neceſſary, that his *Death and Reſurrection* ſhould be Foretold and Performed, that *Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins* might be preached *in his Name, i. e.* as by him Promiſed, and by his own Reſurrection Secured: For the Remiſſion which the Prophets had promiſed, reached no further than to Temporal Puniſhment; but That which Chriſt promiſed, reached after Death to Everlaſting Life.

This is plain by the Apoſtles Diſcourſe above-mentioned, which as he cloſeth with a Triumph over Death, *The ſting of Death is Sin, and the ſtrength of Sin is the Law, but Thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, ſo he buildeth

buildeth the Assurance of our own Victory upon That of Christ; *If the Dead rise not, then is Christ not raised; and if Christ be not raised, your Faith is vain, you are yet in your Sins.* If the Consequence be good one way, it is so the other: If the Being in our Sins follows from the Denial of Christ's Resurrection, then must Remission of Sins import Resurrection from Death. Both of them depend upon the Relation between Sin and Death. *The sting of Death is Sin*; and again, *the Wages of Sin is Death*; and therefore a Full and Perfect Remission of Sin, cannot but import a Full and Perfect Deliverance from Death.

So the Summ Total of the Gospel, which our Saviour himself preached in his Life Time, and Commissioned his Apostles to preach after his Resurrection, is *this, That those who believe in him, shall upon Repentance have such a full Pardon of Sin, as to be delivered from Death.* And, *That Christ who hath promised this, hath given us an Earnest of it, by rising himself from the Dead.*

CHAP. XI.

Of the Manner of the Resurrection, whether in the same Body or another.

WHat we have said concerning the Person in Whom, is true concerning the Matter, which upon his Credit we must *Believe. The Person* we must believe to be God; but into the Manner of his Generation we ought not to enquire: and that there shall be a Resurrection, is Matter of Saving Faith, but the Manner of it is Matter of Curiosity only. The Apostle in That solemn Diatribe, 1 *Cor.* 15. that he might leave nothing untouch't, advanceth an Objection in the 35*th.* verse; *But some Man will say, how are the Dead raised up, and with what Body do they come?* The Objection may be thus urg'd: The

Dead are ſo *buried*, that it ſeems utterly impoſſible their Bodies ſhould be Reſtored: Princes many times have their Bowels buried at a great diſtance from their Limbs; ſome whole Nations *burn* their dead; many are drown'd in the Sea, where they are devoured by Fiſhes; thoſe fiſhes again by others, which perhaps come to the Market and Feed other Men; and by many other ways are the particles ſo diſpers'd, that it ſeems utterly impoſſible to retrieve them.

If this be Objected againſt the Truth of the Reſurrection, the roughneſs of the Apoſtle's Anſwer will be juſt, they are *fools* in doubting God's Omnipotency. All theſe, or what ever other Changes any Man's body may undergo, are not greater than the *Chymiſt* makes in his *Mercury*; which yet again he eaſily recalls to its former body. He that made all things of *nothing* can by the ſame powerful word command every particle to its proper body; nor is he leſs a *fool*, who doubts, whether God Will do this if he hath Promiſed it; becauſe it is Poſſible for God to Perform ſuch a promiſe, but it is Not poſſible he ſhould Break it. But if the Queſtion be, whether God has *promis'd* this, ſo that we do not doubt either his Power or his Veracity, but only our own Apprehenſion of the meaning of his words; This doth not impeach any of God's Perfections, but only our Own Underſtandings. It cannot be Injuſtice againſt God, whom in the midſt of ſuch doubts we undoubtingly believe to be infinitely True; but it is Juſtice to our own underſtandings, which we do not only Believe but Know to be Fallible. If therefore we find the ſame words vulgarly uſed in another ſence, more agreeable to plain Reaſon and God's perfections; Then may we eaſily Enquire, Firſt, *Whether any promiſe of God does Neceſſarily import a Reſtitution of the ſame Numerical matter?* If not, then may we proceed to Enquire; Secondly, *Whether it be more Honourable to God, and more Serviceable to the Deſigns of the Goſpel, that we believe the contrary?*

Firſt,

First, *Whether the word of Promiſe doth Neceſſarily import a Reſtitution of the ſame Numerical matter?* This is fully and clearly anſwered, as ſoon as in common ſpeaking we find the ſame words uſed in a leſs rigid ſence: But if we obſerve how the Apoſtle himſelf hath anſwered This very Queſtion; the leaſt that we thence learn, is *this*, That ſuch a meaning is not matter of Faith, ſince the word of Promiſe hath left it Doubtful, and the Contrary more Probable: For thus the Apoſtle anſwers, *Thou Fool, thou ſoweſt not the body that ſhall be, but God giveth it a body as it pleaſeth him, and to every ſeed its own body*; does not this ſeem to deny a Reſurrection of the ſame *Numerical* Particles? Thou ſoweſt a little ſingle grain, which when it is corrupted, riſeth in *root*, *ſtalk*, *blade*, *ears*, and *grains*, thouſands of times more in matter than was ſown; God giving the body, and yet to every ſeed its *own*. What conſequence can thence be clearer than this, That every one may at the Reſurrection receive his own Body, though it be not the ſame *numerically* that was Buried?

And we may yet further Conſider, that *this* is the Conſtant way of Nature in all *living* Bodies, which we reckon the *ſame* while they keep the ſame Forms, though they Change every Particle of Matter. Grant therefore, that thoſe words of *Job*, *Though worms conſume this fleſh, yet with theſe eyes ſhall I ſee God*, Expreſs his confidence of a Reſurrection; yet will they ſignify no more than *this*, That though Perſpiration Conſume every Atom of my Fleſh, yet ſhall my Eyes be as much the Same, and ſee as Well, as if there were no Change in it: And therefore if there be no more required from *other* Topicks, than from the Letter of the Promiſe, we are at liberty to believe what ſhall ſeem moſt *probable*. The uſual Arguments are two; Firſt from God's Juſtice; Secondly from the Serviceableneſs of the belief.

Firſt it is Argued, that *it is juſt, that the ſame body, which was ſharer in the Sin or the Service, ſhould alſo be ſharer in the Puniſhment or Reward*. But if we will ſpeak properly, the Body hath

no

no ſhare either in the one, or the other: For Matter neither Acteth nor Perceiveth; but the Soul by the Matter. 2 *Cor.* 5. the Apoſtle likens our body to an Houſe, and to Cloaths; the Man Dwells in the one, and Moves in the other; yet neither the one nor the other ſhares *life* with him: And therefore to Argue, That it muſt be the ſame *Numerical* body that ſhall receive Puniſhment at the Reſurrection, is the ſame as to ſay, the Malefactor muſt be Executed in the ſame Cloaths wherein he committed the Crime.

So many years paſt between the injuries which *Joſeph* received from his Brethren, and the Honours which he received from *Pharaoh*, and thereby his whole Body was ſo Changed, that his Brethren knew him not; and there were yet greater Changes both in His and Their bodies, before their Father's Death; yet were not their Conſciences Chang'd, but in their Old Age they feared his Revenge for the Cruelties of their Youth. And if Humane juſtice puniſh an Old Crime, though between the Act and the Diſcovery, every Particle of the body be chang'd, becauſe the ſame Soul makes him the ſame Perſon; how can we doubt but Divine juſtice may at the Reſurrection do the ſame?

Secondly, *Whether it be more Honourable to God, to believe the one or the other*, is the ſame as to ask, Whether it be more Honourable to ſalve all his Perfections, or to Rob one that we may Cloath the other? If we ſo believe, as to Magnify God's Veracity in performance of his Promiſe, and his Juſtice in diſtributing Rewards and Puniſhments; will it not more juſtify his Wiſdom, to believe that he will Act Suitably to that order of things which himſelf hath Eſtabliſhed, than that he will Unaccountably Exerciſe his Omnipotency? It is not (we confeſs) it is not for *Silly Men* to preſcribe Rules for *God's* Wiſdom in its Particular Acts: But we muſt have a clear and diſtinct Definition of the Nature of Wiſdom in General; otherwiſe we pay him but an *empty word* when we aſcribe That perfection to

to him. Now the Definition of Wisdom importeth a Choice, *first* of a good End, and *then* of suitable Means: If therefore the Means be Unsuitable, either in Kind or Proportion, That will make a defect in Wisdom. But to believe that God will by his Omnipotency work innumerable Miracles in Raising Each Particular Body, when all his Promises may be as well Verified, and all his good Ends as well Promoted in a way *less* Miraculous; may seem no less a Diminution of his Wisdom, than Exaltation of his Power.

Let us then consider to what purpose is the Resurrection promis'd, and our belief of it requir'd? The Apostle hath given two Reasons especially for it: First, *That our joy may be full*; and Secondly, That we may *Partake of God's Nature.*

I. The Resurrection is therefore promised *that our joy may be full.* And if we consider the Strength of Wishes, and the Faintness of Hopes, which Mankind without Christ Labour'd under; we may thence compute how great a joy the promise may bring to a longing mind. The words of *Seneca* in his 102. *Epist.* gives us a good Hypotyposis of it: *I took pleasure to debate upon the Eternity of Souls, nay more I was fully Resolved therein; for I easily believ'd the Opinions of great Men rather Promising than Proving so great a Matter. I gave my self over to this so great hope, and now grow hateful to my self: And now contemn the Reliques of my broken years, being ready to be Transferred into that immeasurable time and possession of that infinite Eternity; when as suddenly I was awakened by thy letter, which made me dismiss so sweet a dream, which hereafter I will Revive and Redeem again, as soon as I shall have satisfied thy Expectation.* Such were the feeble flutterings of the best Humane Wisdom, wanting the Gospel. The strength of their Wishes Raised them a little towards Hope, but it wanting sufficient support, quickly fell back again into Fear.

In two Respects especially was their Joy defective. First, *Want of Confidence in the Persons from whom they Received the Promises;*

miſes; and Secondly, *Scantneſs of the Happineſs promiſed.*

1. They had no confident *Belief in the Perſons*, whom the Philoſopher calleth indeed *Great Men*, but complaineth that they *Proved* not what they *Promiſed*. But the Author of the Goſpel is a Perſon not only Great, but Infinite; and no leſs ſo in Power, than Faithfulneſs; ſo that there is no place for the leaſt diſtruſt.

2. Another (and to the preſent purpoſe more conſiderable) defect of Humane Hopes, was the *Scantneſs of the Expected Happineſs*; it was Immortality indeed, but a Carnal one. They pretended to anſwer *Job*'s Complaint, by Equalling a Dead Man's Hopes to thoſe of a Tree, which Springs again when it is cut down; but they had no thoughts of ſuch a Harveſt as the Apoſtle promiſeth. And that the Hopes of the *Phariſees* were no better than thoſe of the *Philoſophers*, ſeemeth plain from That Objection, wherewith the *Sadducees* pretended to Gravel our Saviour: For it cannot be reaſonably imagined, but amidſt ſo long Converſation, and ſo many Diſputes, as had ſawed that queſtion between them; the *Phariſees* muſt needs have better informed them, if *themſelves* had underſtood the difference between the Preſent Life and the Future.

And now that our Lord hath ſo plainly revealed that we ſhall be ἰσάγγελοι *equal to the Angels*, that his Apoſtle hath no leſs plainly declared, that our Lord will *change our vile bodies, that they may be like to his own moſt Glorious body*, that the Reſurrection ſhall make great and Glorious Variety of Changes, from Natural to Spiritual, from Weak to Powerful, from Corruptible to Incorruptible, *&c*; that we ſhould ſtill be ſo fond of our load of *Carrion*, as to think it a *diminution* of our Happineſs, if we be not again yoked to *numerically* the ſame dead matter; ſeemeth no leſs a Contradiction to the Deſires of Nature, than to the Promiſes of Scripture. This ſay ſome, will be the joy of the Reſurrection, that the two Old Friends ſhall meet and Embrace each other: But a little Conſideration will anſwer, that ſuch a meeting would not be of old Friends, but of old Enemies.

Either

Either the Soul ſhall at the Reſurrection have a Remembrance of her late dead Body, and the Old Converſation ſhe had with it, or ſhe ſhall *not*: If ſhe ſhall *not*, then there can be no more Joy if ſhe meet the ſame Old Fleſh, than if all be New; but if ſhe does remember her old Mate, and her old Converſation with it; then muſt ſhe remember all the Contentions ſhe had with it, all the Wounds ſhe received from it, all the Dangers which ſhe hardly eſcaped by watching againſt it; and it ſeemeth very ſtrange that the Soul at the Reſurrection ſhould find much Matter of Joy in that Fleſh, as it's greateſt Friend, which did it's moſt, and had not God's Goodneſs aſſiſted, would have prevailed, to make the Reſurrection it ſelf infinitely miſerable.

However, by our Preſent Thoughts let us judge of our Future. Were it put to our Choice, whether we would continue in the Same Fleſh, however exalted in Accidents, or tranſlated into a Body, which ſhould not have the leaſt Particle of that Fleſh, but ſuch Properties as ſhould Equal us with Angels; ſhould we ſo regard our Dead Senſeleſs Matter, as to make the leaſt difficulty of Exchanging it to ſuch an Advantage? Our Matter feels no more than do our Cloaths, and our Souls in ſuch an Exchange, can feel nothing but Exceſs of Joy in her New Robes: ſo that from *This* Topick will ſpring no Neceſſity, that we ſhould *believe* what we cannot *rejoyce* in.

II. Another great Deſign of the Goſpel, or rather the ſame in effect, is *this*, That we may *have Fellowſhip with GOD*; which St. *Peter* plainly paraphraſeth, ſaying, *For this Reaſon are given to us, exceeding great and precious Promiſes, that by them we may be made Partakers of the Divine Nature.* Since therefore all the Force which the Promiſes have towards effecting this good End, is derived from the Joy which ſhall reward them who are invited by ſuch Promiſes to ſuch Godlineſs; If we believe the Promiſes in ſuch a Senſe as maketh them moſt Deſireable, we thereby exerciſe ſuch a Faith, as is moſt Ser-

viceable to that Adæquate End, for which the Promiſes are Given, and Faith Required.

And the Difference in this reſpect is ſo *ſmall* between the two Opinions, that no Conſidering Perſon will abate his diligence in God's Service, if he believe he ſhall be bleſſed with a Body ſo Glorious, ſo Vigorous, ſo Every way better than *this*, that he cannot have the leaſt Wiſh it ſhould be numerically the ſame.

In ſhort therefore, this is not Matter of Faith, but Curioſity. To believe, that the Faithful ſhall have a Reſurrection to Happineſs, greater than they can *ask or think*; This is Mattter of Faith, becauſe our Lord himſelf hath made it ſo, declared it to be the very Reaſon of his coming into the World, and commanded his Apoſtles to preach it as his Goſpel. This if we ſo believe, as thence to proceed to the Apoſtles moſt Rational and Godly Inference, to be *ſtedfaſt and immoveable, alway abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; we have then both *Matter* and *Soul of Faith*, and may ſecurely *rely* on God's Faithfulneſs to perform his Promiſe in the beſt Manner.

And now we have throughly diſſected *that* half of the Goſpel, which filleth whole Libraries with Books of impertinent Subtilties. Whatever is diſputed concerning any Point of Religion, falſly ſo called, pretendeth to convince us of what we ought to believe in *that* Particular. But One or Two General Aphoriſms, diſcovering Why and How far Belief it ſelf is required, as abſolutely neceſſary, will ſilence all thoſe endleſs (every way endleſs) Diſputes. This ſo beneficial and neglected Work we have endeavoured to perform, by laying open the whole Myſtery of the Goſpel: *viz.* by Shewing,

That its Buſineſs was to reduce the *Jews* from their Bondage under the Law of *Moſes*, and the *Gentiles* from their infinitely *worſe* Bondage under the Worſhip of *Devils*, to the Service of God, by the free Directions of their own Nature, aſſiſted by glorious

glorious Revelations. That to this end he *ſent his only Begotten Son into the World*; teaching them that the beſt Service of God, conſiſteth in being *like him*; and for their Encouragement therein, promiſing them upon Repentance, Pardon of Sins paſt, and Everlaſting *Life*. And becauſe thoſe Promiſes could no otherwiſe be effectual, Faith muſt neceſſarily be called for, with importunity ſuitable, both to the Difficulties and Dangers which at That time encompaſſed it, and to the Serviceableneſs which at All Times accompanieth it.

And ſince it is incongruous, that the Means ſhould be more difficult than the End; it cannot be, that Faith ſhould be more above the Reach of an honeſt Mind, than the Holineſs to which it is Subſervient.

The Goſpel was firſt preached to the *Poor*, and wherever it came, was firſt and beſt Entertained by Such: it's one Learned Apoſtle renounced the *Words which Man's Wiſdom teacheth*, and fell into Jealouſie, leſt his Diſciples *Minds ſhould be corrupted* with *Knowledge falſly ſo called:* and whether he had *Reaſon* ſo to do, will appear by our *next* Enquiry.

ENQUIRY II.

What Changes or Additions latter Ages have made in Matter of FAITH?

THis we propoſed as a *ſecond* Enquiry: but it is not ſo properly an ENQUIRY as a Muſter; They are ſo Numerous and ſo Obvious, ſtand ſo thick in our way, and ſo juſtle us on every ſide, that it will not be difficult to Find them, but to Range them into Order.

The *General* Change, which leadeth all the reſt, is the Change of its *Place*. It is unlinked from the *Chain* wherein it is ineſtimably ſerviceable; and treated in its *ſingle* Separate Nature, as

if it were ſome precious Diamond, Valuable for Brightneſs, or ſome other irreſpective virtue of its own.

We find our Lord Honour it, as the great King did *Daniel* above all his Princes; we hear him declare, that himſelf came into the World to Advance it therein, we hear him promiſe it Eternal Life: We hear both Him and his Apoſtle make it half the Goſpel, we meet it in every page of the New Teſtament; and upon ſight of it's ſo great glory, we talk as St. *Peter* did, when confounded at the Brightneſs of our Lord's Rayment and Countenance, *he knew not what he ſaid.*

We conſider not, that two of the Reaſons which induced our Lord to lay ſuch weight upon it, are by his good Providence not only expired, but turned to the contrary point, and its now Adequate worth is its Serviceableneſs. It may boaſt as did the Vine in *Jotham*'s parable, of *Chearing God and Man*, but it is by its Wine, not by its Timber.

This therefore is the Mother-Error, that whereas Faith is no better than a Retainer to Holineſs, it is placed in the Throne, as an Independent Abſolute Prince. This I ſay is the Mother-Error, and is Parent of two others: For it is thought to be a duty to ſuch a Prince, to make it as great as poſſible; 1. By *Enlarging its dominions as far*, and 2. By *Exalting its Prerogative as high* as can be; and ſo Truth is overdone in both.

I. *The Empire of Faith is Extended as far as poſſible*; not only beyond its Proper bounds, but beyond All bounds whatſoever. *Braſidas*, when asked how far the Territories of *Sparta* Reached, anſwered, *as far as I can caſt my Lance*; and a *Romaniſt*, if asked, how far matter of Faith is Extended? Will anſwer, as far as the *Pope* ſhall declare any thing to be *de fide*. And that *this* may reach far and wide enough, the *Schoolmen* have imployed their inventions, to make diſcoveries of ſuch Queſtions, and entangle them with ſuch Objections, as may ſeem Worthy and Neceſſary to be defined. By this Art have we gotten a vaſt Army of New Doctrines of Faith; and the Goſpel, of whoſe Simplicity

plicity the greateſt of the Apoſtles gloried, is become a Science of all others moſt perplexed. Our modern Theology hath ſo much more of Metaphyſicks than of the Goſpel, that in defiance to St. *Paul*, who declared that the light of the Goſpel was ſo bright, as not to be hid to any but *ſuch as had their eyes blinded by the God of this World*; we may ſay of it as *Ariſtotle* did of the *ſcience* into which it is moulded, *it is ſo publiſhed as not to be publiſhed*, ſince there is hardly a word in it, whoſe full meaning is throughly underſtood.

Where the beſt eye can diſcover nothing but Limpid Liquor, the *Microſcope* findeth a multitude of little Animals; and where a plain underſtanding Apprehendeth a clear Truth, there a diſputatious Schoolman findeth a multitude of little Doctrines, as uſeleſs as thoſe Animals. The unhappy difference is, that the *Microſcope* pretendeth no more but to ſpring Game for our Curioſity; but the *Schools* impoſe their Dictates upon our Faith; not only as Worthy to be Known, but Neceſſary to be Believed.

It is not ſufficient for the Biſhop of *Rome* to ſet up for an Oracle; he pretendeth not only to Declare what is True, but to Change the very Nature of Truth, by making That matter of *Faith*, which before was only matter of *Curioſity*; and thereby under the Title of *Vicar of Chriſt*, claimeth a power to deſtroy the Souls for whoſe Salvation Chriſt died. For whenever a new matter is made *de fide*, it is thereby made deſtructive to as many as cannot conform their belief to the *Pope's* judgment. Had it not been diſputed, it had not had any need to be ſo defined; and thoſe who before oppoſed it upon what they took for Good Reaſon, cannot now find That Reaſon the weaker; ſo the Fruit of the Deciſion is only This, That the belief which before was Innocent, is now become Damnable.

They ſeem indeed to make Ample Amends, by the *implicit* Faith which they ſay will avail for the Common people, to whom it ſhall be ſufficient to believe as the Church believeth; though

though they neither Underſtand, nor ſo much as Hear of any Articles of Faith; which by this Salvo are ſo far from being Multiplied, that they are Annihilated.

But 1. *Where are we commanded to believe thus implicitly in the Church?* and 2. *What is ſuch a Faith good for?*

1. *Where doth our Lord Require this implicit Faith in the Church?* He ſaid indeed, as he had Reaſon, *Ye believe in God, believe alſo in Me*; but where did he ſay? Ye believe in Me, believe alſo in my Church. And

2. *To what purpoſe ſhould he ſo command?* How is any Man inſpirited to holineſs, by believing he knoweth not what? What Fear or Love of God can be kindled, what Comfort or Joy Advanced, what Motive to Godlineſs Actuated, by ſuch an *uncertain ſound?* Yea further, why muſt the Church in General, believe more than every Member in Particular?

We diſpute not about *words*, and therefore grant the Church to be the *Paſtors*; but ſtill we ask, why is it Neceſſary even for *Them*, to believe more than our Lord himſelf Required? If ſuch a belief be worth a Command, ſhew us wherein that worth conſiſteth, and you will at the ſame time ſhew our Lord to be defective in Omitting ſuch a Command. But if it have in it nothing worth commanding, then thoſe who impoſe it, do at once Invade our Lord's Legiſlative power, and Defeat his gracious Purpoſe, of ſaving all that believe what himſelf required to be believed.

If there be any thing yet more intolerable, This perhaps may be ſo, That thoſe who deny the *Pope* this impoſing Power, Aſſume it to themſelves. *Heterodoxy* with *Them* ſignifieth no leſs danger, than doth *Hereſy* with the *Papiſts*. They that want either Courage or Care to examin what they are taught, deny it to others; and as they believe without Reaſon, ſo do they without Meaſure.

If ſuch a Man light upon truth in every little Queſtion, he muſt be very happy, ſince it is conteſted with equal confidence on either ſide, mutually Condemning each other as *Heterodox*,

Heterodox, when indeed both ſides are ſo; for the word properly ſignifieth ſuch as hold *Other* Opinions than the word of God hath Revealed, and ſuch cannot be matter of Diſpute.

II. They who thus extend the Dominions, do alſo *Exalt the Prerogative of Faith*, above 1. *Meaſure*, 2. *Holineſs*, 3. *Charity*, and 4. *Reaſon*.

1. *Thoſe who exeend its Dominions beyond its due Limits, do alſo exalt its power above Meaſure.* I ſay, *thoſe who Extend its Dominions beyond its Due Limits:* For *within* them we readily acknowledge it's power Abſolute, and all Obedience Due to it without reſerve.

But the proper Dominions of the Faith required by Univerſal Religion, exceed not this one propoſition, that *God cannot Lye*. This is the Great Commandment of the *Goſpel*, and anſwereth to the great one of the *Law*. As *That* ſaith thou ſhalt *Love*, ſo *this* ſaith, thou ſhalt *Believe the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might*. This, as it is a Truth of infinite Certainty, ſo muſt it have Abſolute Power upon our belief, as we found it to have upon *Abraham's*, in defiance to all Oppoſitions that might have been made by Reaſon or Nature. And the Proper Dominions of the Faith Required in the Goſpel, exceed not theſe two Propoſitions, That we believe Jeſus to be the Son of God, and that we ſhall have a Reſurrection by Virtue of his.

But there are other Truths, and thoſe Vertually included in *Theſe* Great ones; the belief whereof muſt be Meaſured by the intereſt they may have in the proper Vertue of Faith, which we have found to be twofold. 1. *Juſtice to God's Veracity*, 2. *Serviceableneſs to Piety*.

1. Some Doctrines are the immediate apparent Iſſue of thoſe great Truths, ſo plainly publiſhed in the Word of God, that he that runneth may read them. Others require cloſe Application, a good Eye, and perhaps good Art too. Muſt all theſe Doctrines,

ctrines, ſo Unequal in their Evidence, be received with Equal, and that Supream, Confidence?

If my Confidence of the Truth of the Doctrine, equal my Evidence that it is God's Word, I make full Payment of what is due to God's Veracity: But if I doubt whether that which you tell me is God's Word, be ſo *indeed*; This may be ſome defect of Juſtice to Your Veracity, but it can be none to God's. Convince me that God hath ſaid it, and my Confidence of the Truth ſhall equal that Conviction; *till* then, neither is God's Veracity, nor my Faith concerned.

2. Another Worth of Faith is derived from its Serviceableneſs to that great and good End, for the ſake of which, the Promiſes are given us. And are thoſe Doctrines which are impoſed upon our Belief as *de fide*, all Equally, all Supremely, ſerviceable to Holineſs? Are not ſome More, ſome Leſs, nay moſt of them *not at all ſo?* And ſhall a Confidence equally Fruitleſs, Groundleſs, and Boundleſs, be accepted for my Juſtification, beyond a leſs Confident, but more Fruitful Belief; yea or Doubt of a Propoſition, of which I have no better Reaſon to believe that it cometh from God, but *this*, that you tell me ſo?

In a Word, if for *this* end the Promiſes be given us, *That by them we may be Partakers of the Divine Nature* (as St. *Peter* expreſly affirms) then he that receiveth them, and (which is more) he that receiveth any Other Truths, with ſuch an Effectual Faith, as ſhall transform him thereinto, receiveth them with Confidence enough.

II. Some exalt Faith *above* Holineſs, yea and *againſt* it too. Not only the thorough-paced *Antinomians* and *Solifidians*, but many others, who call themſelves Orthodox, finding no intrinſick Worth, proportionable to the great Price at which they find Faith valued, Willfully or Haſtily overlooking its Relation to Holineſs, borrow it a value from its Relation to the Perſon of Chriſt, which no Chriſtian doubteth to be infinitely Valuable. *Faith* (ſay they) *is the hand whereby we Apply Chriſt to our ſelves*;

ſelves; and by this Application, Chriſt is made Ours, and His Righteouſneſs imputed to us as if it were our own; and it Juſtifieth not by its Own Worthineſs, but by the Merits of Chriſt, which it layeth hold on and applyeth.

Now if Holineſs of Life have any place among ſuch Doctrines, Thanks muſt be paid to God's over-ruling Grace, and the deep Impreſſions of Natural Religion, not to be defaced by any oppoſite Notions: For if Chriſt's Righteouſneſs be imputed to me as if it were mine own, what need I labour for *any* other? Will not all ſuch Labour be worſe than loſt? Will it not caſt Diſhonour upon Chriſt's Righteouſneſs as Inſufficient, and upon his Precepts, as Needleſs? Need I, Can I, be more righteous than Chriſt?

And where (in the Name of Chriſt) where do we in all the Book of God, or in Reaſon, meet any Intimation of this fine Doctrine of *Application of Chriſt to our ſelves, the hand of Faith, Imputed Righteouſneſs*, &c. We read indeed that *Abraham's Faith was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs*; and ſo ſhall *ours* be imputed to *us*, if we believe as He did: But ſtill it was *Abraham's* Own proper Faith, and not Anothers; and *that* Faith was no leſs Obedient than Confident. But what is that to *Chriſt's Righteouſneſs imputed to us*, and that only by virtue of laying hold upon him by an Application inverted? Not by Applying our ſelves to Chriſt, conforming our ſelves to his Precepts and Example; but Applying Him to our ſelves, by meer forceable laying hands upon him? Imputation of Chriſt's *Perſonal* Righteouſneſs, we no where find in Scripture, either *Phraſe* or *Thing*: But the Imputation thereof, as to its *Effects*, to thoſe Believers, whoſe Faith hath produced in them the Fruit of Righteouſneſs, if it be ſincere, though ſhort of Perfect, is a Truth not to be queſtion'd.

Let us then, for Chriſt's ſake, apply our ſelves to him with all Aſſurance of his Power and Deſire to ſave us; and let this Confidence deliver us up to an Abſolute Submiſſion to his Conduct. But let us beware of truſting to his Imputed Righteouſ-

neſs, without Real Holineſs; leſt we obtain only Imputed Salvation, and fall into Real Condemnation. And on the other ſide, let us beware alſo that we Rob him not of our due acknowledgments: for what the Apoſtle ſaith of Faith in the Abſtract, is no leſs True of it in Conjunction with Holineſs. *By Faith working by Love we are Saved, and that not of our Selves, it is the gift of God.*

III. It is exalted above and againſt *Charity*, which it is it's Duty and Honour to ſerve. We have found one of the great Ends of the Goſpel to be the Advancement of the Divine life, whereof Charity is ſo great a part (if we may call it a Part) that however Great and Many things are ſpoken of *Faith*, Greater are ſpoken of *Charity*. The Apoſtle is Expreſs in giving *This* the Precedence, *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, theſe three; but the greateſt of theſe is Charity.* More yet, he plainly declareth that Faith dependeth on it for its ſaving power, *In Chriſt Jeſus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love.* And that this work may reach not our Lord only, but our Brother too, he Exhorteth the *Epheſians* to it by *This* Argument, *There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm.* But Experience too plainly proveth, that whatever force *Unity of Faith* may have for *Unity of Spirit in the bond of peace*, the ſame hath Multiplication of Articles of Faith, for dividing of minds by Schiſms and Feuds. For while the Chriſtian World had but *one Faith*, their mutual love was the wonder and Envy of their Enemies: But from the time that it Received Additionals, and every New Doctrine became a New Religion, the Mutual Hatred of ſeveral Sects hath been no *leſs* wonderful.

For ſo much greater regard hath every one for his Particular Belief (which he calleth his Religion) than for that General Faith wherein All agree; that his Neighbors Diſſent therein, weigheth more *Againſt* Charity, than his Agreement in the Greateſt Truths can do *For* it.

The

The good Emperors Argument was no leſs Unproſperous than Pious, whereby he endeavoured to cool the heat of the contending Parties, in the firſt and moſt Uncharitable diſpute that ever Rent the Chriſtian world. *Philoſophers* (ſaid he) *though in many things they Differ, yet while they Agree in the main, do not Hate one another for their differences in Few things, but Love one another for their Agreement in the reſt; and why ſhould not We do ſo, who profeſs a more Loving Religion?* If we ſeek the ſolution of this riddle only from the nature of Faith, or from Scripture or Reaſon, we ſhall never get ſatisfaction; but as ſoon as we caſt our eye upon the Intereſts and Pretences of the Church of *Rome*, we immediately meet it. For when Doctrines are Multiplied and Entangled, and men wheedled into apprehenſions that their Salvation dependeth upon their right belief in every one of them; *Then* will they be glad to ſhelter their unſatisfied conſciences in the boſom of *That* Church, which promiſeth them ſafety. But if any be ſo bold as to queſtion *That* Fundamental, and thereby ſhake the Power and Greatneſs which is built upon it, however Slight the Matter of the Queſtion be, the very Queſtioning of the Churches Determinations is Damnable, the Man is an *Heretick*, and as an *Heretick* he muſt be handled. He muſt be caſt into the *Inquiſition*, there he muſt languiſh in Darkneſs and Naſtineſs, in Hunger and Cold, and all kinds of miſery, until the ſeaſon come for an *Act of Faith:* For by that Title they expreſs their *Oyer* and *Terminer* which is moſtly but *Triennial.* Then is the Wretch put upon his Trial, and if found guilty, he is arrayed in a Coat painted with fire and devils, wherein he is burnt alive, and the people are made to believe, that after death he muſt ſuffer in Hell what is ſo Repreſented in his Coat, and Executed upon his Body; and he muſt loſe what all other Malefactors enjoy, the Charity of their Prayers.

This they call an *Act of Faith*, and it is ſolemnly executed upon as many as that Holy Court of Inquiſition can get into their Pounces.

God be bleſſed, *Thoſe Curſt Cows have ſhort Horns*; That Court reacheth not *all* Countries, but the Uncharitableneſs of *Rome* doth. There is no Reproach ſo great as that of Heretick: to be out of the Boſom of the Church, is to be out of Gods Favour, he is hated of God, and muſt be ſo of all that love God.

Such is the Effect of Multiplying Articles of Faith, in relation to *Charity*.

IV. It is exalted above and againſt REASON; and ſo deſtroyeth the Foundation whereon it ſelf is built. For we have found this to be the Eſſential Virtue of Faith, that it is *Juſtice to God's Faithfulneſs*; and This is therefore moſt Juſt, becauſe moſt Reaſonable.

Nor is it leſs true in the *Retail:* Nothing is to be believed further than Reaſon proveth it to be True. Our Lord himſelf appealed to it for the Belief which he required: He pleaded his Miracles for Evidence, and thence claimed Judgment.

Yea, thoſe who require us to renounce our Reaſon, appeal to it themſelves: For they pretend to give us reaſon why we ſhould renounce it, and ſo contradict *themſelves* no leſs than they do Reaſon. They are indeed no better than the Ravings in *Bedlam* which we hear. It was a Caſt of *Tertullian*'s Montaniſm, which tranſported him into ſuch Extravagance as to ſay, *Credo quia impoſſibile eſt.* And the Author of *Religio Medici*, when he ſaid, *There are not Contradictions enough in Religion for an Active Faith*, might have remember'd, that exceſs of Confidence in defect of Reaſon, is a certain Symptom of Madneſs.

It is true, in all Subjects, in all Arts and Sciences, Reaſon is pleaded for Error; but again it is confuted by greater Reaſon, as Stars are by the Sun, which baffleth and ſilenceth their weaker Light.

Abraham *believed in Hope againſt Hope.* It appeared impoſſible in Nature, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a Father after he was ſacrificed; but it appeared more impoſſible, that God ſhould *lye*, than that he ſhould do more than Nature. What I know to be the Word of God, I believe abſolutely, becauſe I certainly know God

God to be infinitely True; but that This is God's Word, and This the Meaning of it, I So far only believe, as I find Reaſon for it. For as in Juſtice to God's revealed Word, I am bound to pay it my utmoſt Belief, ſo in Juſtice to his Word written in my heart, I am to refuſe my Belief, till ſome Evidence make it appear *due*.

You ſay, Religion hath *Myſteries*; let us therefore conſider what a *Myſtery* is. In the Old Teſtament we find not the Word: in the New, we find it conſiſt of Two Parts, the One Open, the Other Secret. Sometimes it ſignifieth a Spiritual Truth wrapt up in a Senſible, thus the Union of Chriſt with his Church, is a Myſtery contained in that of a Man with his Wife. Sometimes a Truth hidden from ſome *Ages*; thus St. *John* declareth the Goſpel to have been *hidden from the beginning*, but then *made manifeſt*: Or from ſome *Perſons*, thus our Lord ſaid to his Diſciples, *to you is given to know the Myſteries of the Kingdom of God, but to others in Parables*.

And this is the moſt uſual Sence of the Word in *Pagan* Writers, and from *them*, with ſome other of their Conceits, Entertained by ſuch Ages of the Church as are held in great Veneration. The *Myſta* knew ſome Rules for Religious Worſhip, which he Learned from books locked up in *Archives*, no not Acceſſible to the People. The Fathers of the Chriſtian Church at firſt ſo imitated them, as to hide from the *Catechumens* the Rites of Sacraments, which from thence took the Name of the Myſteries; and herein they were ſo Cautious of Concealing the form of Adminiſtring the *Euchariſt*, eſpecially, that they durſt not commit the words to writing, ſo much as in a Letter to a Biſhop, leſt they might by ſome Accident fall into uncapable Hands. And After-Ages came cloſer up to their pattern, by telling the Laity, that implicite Faith in the Church muſt ſatisfy them in Myſteries of Faith.

So the word plainly importeth two contrary Aſpects upon two different Perſons; Hid to the one, and open to the other: But that it ſhould at the ſame Time, and to the ſame Perſons, be

be both Hid and Open, is more than a hidden Myſtery; it is an open Contradiction; and it is no leſs ſo, that I muſt believe what is perfectly hidden from my underſtanding.]

If the Goſpel profeſs it ſelf to be a Revealer of Myſteries, then, to tell me, that it concealeth ſome Truths as Myſteries, yet requireth me to believe them as revealed, this is no leſs a Calumny upon the Goſpel, than an abuſe of the Word.

He that telleth the Laity, that they muſt be ſatisfied with implicit Faith in the Church, ſpeaketh the Exact Language of a *Pagan Myſtagogue*; but a Faithful Preacher of the Goſpel muſt juſtify himſelf to his People in the Language of St. *Paul* to the Elders of *Epheſus*, *I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you.*

Some may judge of ſuch a Church as boaſteth of Myſteries, by what is written in *Rev.* 17. and take That for a ſummary anſwer to our preſent Enquiry, concerning the *Changes which Later Ages have made in the Faith and Church of Chriſt*, viz. From ſimple *Nakedneſs*, to *Gold*, *Purple*, *Scarlet*, and *Precious Stones*: From *Plain Truth* Preached and believed by the meaneſt, to *Myſteries*: From the moſt Affectionate *Love*, to *drunkenneſs with the Blood of Saints*: From the *Chaſt Spouſe of Chriſt*, to a *great Whore and Mother of Harlot.* But what Truth may lie in ſuch a Cenſure, we may find more fully by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY III.

What Damages or Advantages have enſued upon the Changes and Additions, which latter Ages have made in the Goſpel?

THis Enquiry is double, and requires a Ballance, that in one Scale we may lay the *Damages*, in the other the *Advantages*, and ſo weigh the one againſt the other.

Firſt

Firſt then, we will conſider the DAMAGES, and Theſe in relation to Three Subjects;

1. *To our Lord and his Goſpel.*
2. *To Private Chriſtians in Particular.*
3. *To the Chriſtian Church in General.*

I. *To our Lord's Honour*, theſe Changes bring as great Damages, and in as proper a Sence, as any *Contumelious* Doctrines can. They repreſent Him not as a Good and Wiſe Prince, whoſe Laws tend to the Happineſs of his People; but as a Capricious and humorous one, that without any other Motive, than his unaccountable Will, impoſeth a ſtupid Belief, of a Multitude of Impertinent and Incredible Propoſitions, Without, yea (ſome of them) Againſt all Reaſon; without any other Fruit but (what he moſt hateth) Strife, contrary to that Simplicity wherein the Goſpel glorieth, and whereby Piety and Charity are beſt promoted.

In reference to the *Animal* Life, we find that he meaſureth to us Knowledge by our Needs. Though we can hardly know any thing to the bottom, yet we know Sufficient to anſwer the Requiſites of our Life. *Thouſands* of Years paſſed, before it was queſtioned, whether the *Earth* or the *Sun* move, and it is ſtill a Queſtion. The Diſcoveries of the *Teleſcope* and *Microſcope* are new, yet do they both ſhew us admirable Things; *one* a Multitude of unthought of Stars; the *other* a World of Wonderfully pretty Beauties. And the many Diſcoveries which *Anatomy* hath lately made in our Bodies, do not ſo much contribute to our Knowledge as our Wonder, and not at all inſtruct us in the Operation of our Bodies on our Minds. The ſame Conduct is viſible, in reference to *Spiritual* Life: Our Lord hath plainly Revealed, and required us to Belief, what is ſufficient for the Divine Life; but in Queſtions no way ſerviceable thereto, innocent Ignorance, yea and Error, will no more deſtroy our *Souls*, than an Errour in Philoſophy will our *Bodies*.

But

But that he ſhould require Exact and Confident Belief in every Queſtion, which a ranging Invention can ſtartle: that he ſhould by his Apoſtle require us, to *Avoid fooliſh Queſtions, as knowing that they gender Strife*, and yet to believe the Truth in every one of them; that to prevent our Miſtakes in ſuch forbidden Queſtions, he ſhould eſtabliſh an Oracle, which at pleaſure might coin them into Articles of Faith: Theſe are ſuch contradictions, as among *Themſelves*, ſo to the Wiſdom of God, that no Error can be more diſhourable to him, than ſo vile a conceit of his Conduct.

If further we deſcend to Particulars; take an Inventory of the thus impoſed New Articles of Faith, their irreconcileable oppoſition with the plaineſt Sence and Reaſon, their impudent pimping for the Prieſts intereſts, their Extravagant impertinence to any other end, &c; and then compare ſuch a Goſpel, with that Gracious one which our Lord and his Apoſtles Preached; we ſhall find greater cauſe of wonder, that the Profeſſors of Chriſt's Religion ſhould ſo impudently corrupt it, than that God ſhould ſo *change* his Countenance toward it, as in our *Introduction* we ſaw Reaſon both to Complain he hath done, and Juſtifie his doing it.

The Faith which at firſt prevailed over the World, was no leſs ſuitable to the *Nature*, than to the *Needs* of Mankind. That every Man needed a *Mediator* between a *Holy God* and *himſelf*, every Man's own guilty Conſcience convinced him; that *the Son of God came into the World* to perform that Neceſſary Office, promiſing pardon and Everlaſting life to thoſe that would believe in him as ſuch, was a Doctrine, ſo Eaſie to the Underſtanding, ſo Welcome to the Deſires, and ſo obligingly offered, that as ſoon as it courted the World, it won upon it.

But had the Apoſtles brought the *Modern* Goſpel either to the Learned *Greeks* or rude *Barbarians*, told them that God had ſent his Son into the World to ſave thoſe that would believe, not only in Himſelf, but in his Vicar too; ſhould they then have opened their *Packs* of impertinent Myſteries, declared that ſome men

men thereto firſt Qualified by a *few words*, ſhould afterward by other *five* words turn a Bit of Bread into the Body of God, which himſelf and others muſt firſt Worſhip, and then Eat, *&c*; If ſuch ſtuff as *this* had been preached, and ſuch Credulity as cannot be juſtified from Folly, made the condition whereon men muſt hope to be juſtified from all their ſins; what conſidering man would not rather ſtick to the Religion of his Fathers, *whatever* it were, than change it for one ſo much worſe?

Yes! ſuch a Religion muſt appear much worſe than any *other*; for the Apologiſts, who upon this Topick pleaded for the *Chriſtian* Religion againſt the *Pagan*, though they ſufficiently expoſed the Groſs Follies of the Latter, yet could not charge it with ſo *many* and *Groſs* ones, as thoſe which ſwarm in that *one* Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; nor hath *Mahomet* among all his Whimſies any thing Comparable to it.

What wonder now, that the Goſpel cannot gain in any Country upon *Heatheniſm*, and hath loſt ſo many to *Mahumetiſm*? Yea, what wonder if in its own Bowels it ſuffer ſo much by *Atheiſm*? What wonder that no Religion is ſo much peſtered by it as the *Chriſtian*; no Country ſo much as *that*, where this Oracle hath its Seat?

When a Bold Perſon heareth his Teacher Avow, that it were as good be of no Religion at all, as of any other than That, of Whoſe corruptions he is convinced, his Luſts will ſoon perſwade him to take the Doctor at his word, and Reject All Religion for the ſake of the Corrupt one.

If therefore *Heatheniſm*, *Mahumetiſm*, or *Atheiſm*, be Enemies to the Goſpel; the Changes which Later Ages have made in it, muſt be imputed to their Authors, as ſo many High Treſpaſſes againſt it, and be Condemned in ſuitable Damages.

II. As the Changes made in the Faith are diſhonourable to our Lord and his Goſpel, ſo are they *Pernicious to the Church of*

Chriſt, both in its *Particular Members*, and its *Publick Body* as the Spouſe of Chriſt.

1. *They are Pernicious to Private Chriſtians*, by Robbing them of much of that Happineſs which the Goſpel is deſigned to bring them, which we have found to be, 1. The *Participation of the Divine Nature*, 2. *Fulneſs of joy.*

1. They Rob good Men of much of *that Godlineſs*, which otherwiſe they ſhould have attained. The Apoſtle beſeecheth us *as ſtrangers and Pilgrims, to Abſtain from Fleſhly Luſts which War againſt the Soul.* That War is made by Diverſion: *Wine and Women take away the Heart*; they divert the Soul, from Labouring for the Divine Life, to wallowing in the Brutiſh. And were it poſſible to compute how much miſchief every luſt doth *this* way, we ſhould certainly find that no One, nor perhaps All together, would be found ſo Pernicious, as this One Luſt of Diſputing and Impoſing: For by This One, All the reſt are ſo far ſtrengthened, as our Forces are diverted from warring againſt them.

The more we Diſpute againſt our *Brethren*, the leſs we Diſpute againſt our *Luſts*: That Ardor of Zeal, which elſe would have flamed up in Divine Love, mouldereth away in the black ſmoaky heats of Bitter zeal.

Very Happy ſure muſt the great Diſputers be, whoſe Luſts are ſo mortified, that they can ſpare ſo much of their Time and Affections, to be plaid away at impertinent Exerciſes: Or very Unhappy, if they waſte ſo much of them both, while their Luſts remain Unconfuted. Yea, they are Unhappy if, having baffled their Luſts, they loſe ſo much of Joy, and of Encreaſe in Godlineſs, as with the Same Labour, and infinitely Greater Benefit, they might have purchaſed by Devotion in God's worſhip and ſervice.

The greateſt part of Mankind (we ſee) have not Souls large enough to entertain Both ſorts of Zeal: But look how much there is of Zeal for what they think Faith, againſt what they call Hereſy, ſo much is loſt from Love of God and our Neighbour,

bour, and from Reformation of the moſt mortal Errors of our Lives.

2. They Rob good Men of that *Fulneſs of Joy* which is the Deſign of the Goſpel. *The wicked* (ſaith the Prophet) *are like the Troubled Sea which cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt.* If it be miſerable to be Toſſed with Storms, then are diſputes in matters of Faith miſerably Pernicious; not only by hindering Mens minds from Warring againſt the Luſts which raiſe thoſe Storms; but by Raiſing others no leſs Tempeſtuous, between Faith impoſing things incredible, and Reaſon reſiſting ſuch Impoſitions.

Where is that conſidering perſon who eſcapeth thoſe ſtorms? There are that tell us ſtories of the *Roman* Prieſts themſelves, that they frequently confeſs, that all their ſtruglings cannot ſubdue their Reaſon to a Belief of the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, and that their Confeſſors alſo in Their turns confeſs the ſame to their Confeſſors; but cannot either Give or Receive ſuch Penance, as can remove the incurable evil. What conflicts muſt ſuch contrary Winds Neceſſarily raiſe in a Soul infinitely Deſirous and Equally Unable to believe.

Moraliſts promiſe us Peace and Joy if we ſubdue our Luſts. The *Apoſtles* upon better warrant make us the ſame Promiſes. Alas! now we find Another, and that an Invincible Enemy, made of That very Friend, by whoſe help we were to have obtained That Victory. By help of good Reaſon, aſſiſted by God's Grace, we may ſubdue our Luſts; but how ſhall we ſubdue our Reaſon, which as it is our own Nature, without which we cannot be Men, ſo it is the Image of God, and like its Original, Immortal and Invincible? Muſt we deface God's Image, that we may partake of his Nature? Fight againſt him *in Effigie*, that we may obey him in his *Vicar*? This were to Perform Contradictions that we may Believe them, and we ſhall find the *one* no leſs above our ſtrength than the *other*; but after all endeavours, either to Satisfy or Stupify our minds, we ſhall never be able to *Quiet* them.

A hard Warfare indeed! First, by our *Reaſon* we muſt fight againſt our *Luſts*, and then by *Faith* we muſt fight againſt our *Reaſon*; which yet we muſt find invincible, and ſo the War deſperate.

Another, and no leſs unhappy War, do theſe additional Doctrines raiſe toward our *Brethren*, whom they tempt us to hate and perſecute, under pretence of anſwering *Jude*'s Alarm, *to contend earneſtly for the Faith*. Something of this we have ſeen under the conſideration, that *Faith is exalted above Charity*: And ſomething more we ſhall ſee in obſerving the Miſchiefs which accrue to the Church of Chriſt in its *Publick Capacity*. To which therefore we haſten, without ſtopping at the mutual Enmities between *Private* Chriſtians, however viſible and lamentable.

III. The next Subject of Damage is, the *Church of Chriſt in its General Capacity*; and This indeed is concerned in all the reſt. For the Community, which is the Catholick Church, is the Spouſe of Chriſt, whoſe Happineſs is the Adequate End of the Goſpel; whereof every Promiſe and Precept is employed as a Means to ſerve it, and therefore whatever croſſeth this good Deſign, if it come from our Lord, muſt diſhonour his Conduct.

Again, the Catholick Church is a Body compact of *ſingle* Members, whoſe ſeveral Happineſs or Pain affecteth the *whole*.

Whether our Lord hath been faithful or defective in his care for the Happineſs of every particular, and the whole Community, how ſhall we examin? If by his Own and his Apoſtles *Precepts*, no Religion in the World could ever vie with the Goſpel, either in Precepts or Arguments for the deareſt Love, the greateſt Happineſs of the Church, as well Triumphant as Militant: If by the *Practice of its Profeſſors* none ever ſtirred up ſuch mutual Quarrels among private Perſons, ſuch cruel Perſecutions by Princes, ſuch bloody Wars between Nations. This

ſheweth

ſheweth the Conduct of the Diſputacious, as irreconcileable with the Deſign of the Goſpel, as are the Controverſies which they foment.

Our Lord indeed appointed it for an Incendiary, but its Fires were to be thoſe of the moſt ardent Love: It is from the Corruptions of Later Ages, that thoſe *Lambent Flames* are by bitter Zeal changed to *Devouring Fires*. Our Lord's great *Apoſtle* ſaith, That *in Chriſt Jeſus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love*; but his pretended *Vicar* ſaith, *Nothing availeth but Faith, working by Zeal; and the beſt Zeal is the moſt bitter.*

The Armies which *Blind Zeal* raiſed for the recovery of the *Holy Land* from *Infidels*, have been diverted by this *Bitter Zeal*, for the Corrupters of the Chriſtian Faith, againſt the Oppoſers of thoſe Corruptions; and Pardon of Sin promiſed to ſuch as ſhould loſe their Lives in ſo holy a Cauſe: Wherein how many have been deſtroyed, who can compute? Some have done their Endeavours, who give us *this* Account.

Of *Albigenſes* and *Waldenſes* ſlain *Nine hundred thouſand.* From thence to the Reformation no man hath ſet down the Account of thoſe that have been cut off, partly by *Fire*, partly by the *Sword*, partly by other Torments. From the beginning of the *Jeſuites*, to the year 1580, in little more than *thirty years*, *Balduinus* noteth almoſt *nine hundred thouſands* put to death by the alone hand of the *Executioner*. The D. of *Alva* gloried in the ſlaughter of *ſix and thirty thouſands* in *Belgium* only, in a few years. *Vergerius* witneſſeth, That the *Inquiſition*, in ſcarce *thirty* years, conſumed a *hundred and fifty thouſands* by ſeveral kinds of Torments. We cannot ſtop our Ears or Eyes ſo hard, as to avoid the lamentable Sight and Complaint of our *next* Neighbours ſuffering (under him that calleth himſelf *The moſt Chriſtian King*, and glorieth in the Atchievement) more than Any, yea, than All the Primitive Chri-

Chriſtians ſuffered under thoſe whom our Fathers called *cruel Perſecutors*, but *this* Compariſon will repreſent as *mild Princes.*

Aſtoniſhment and Grief here ſtop us; we therefore turn to examine what weight the other Scale carrieth.

II. What Advantages *do accrue by the Changes which Later Ages have made in the Faith of the Goſpel?*

Here we muſt crave the grant of two Suppoſitions:

1. *That the Clergy, in oppoſition to the People, and the Church of* Rome, *in oppoſition to all other Churches, is Chriſt's Spouſe, and conſequently, what is gained to that Spouſe is gained to Chriſt himſelf.*

2. *That the Temporal Advantages which accrue to that Spouſe, may be equivalent to the Souls which may be loſt to purchaſe them.*

Unleſs theſe two *ſmall* Conceſſions may be granted, we have not a word to ſay; but if they *be*, That Church will ſhew ſuch Gains, as if they fall ſhort of the full value, yet ſhall be ſure to avoid the Complaint of *David*, that they *ſell God's People for nought, and take no Money for them.* It is confeſſed, *Mony* in kind is not ſo properly the Gain made by this part of the Goſpel, yet may it be *reduced* hither: For were not mens Underſtandings muffled by *Implicit Faith*, they could never be ſo groſly cheated, as they are in the Doctrines of Repentance. But that *Houſe of Merchandiſe* we may take another time to viſit; at preſent we are in purſuit of a nobler Gain, *Honour* and *Power*; and in theſe we ſhall divide the *Gains* as we did the *Damages.* For as in *thoſe* we conſidered what accrued to God, and what to Man; ſo in *theſe* we ſhall ſee *what is got-*

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ten to the Pope as Chriſt's Vicar, and what to inferiour Prieſts as his Officers.

I. The POPE, under the character of *Chriſt's Vicar*, by Changes and Additions made in the Faith of the Goſpel, hath gotten that boundleſs Honour and Power, to which he hath no other pretence.

It is not a word or two of our Lord, ſtrained beyond the mind of the Speaker; it is not his *Paſce oves*, or *Tu es Petrus*, that can move a ſerious man to any thing but aſtoniſhment at ſuch intolerable *Impudence*, as dares ſo to burleſque our Lord's words; but it is the pretended *neceſſity* of an *Infallible Chair*, which hath advanced that Biſhop, not only above all other *Biſhops*, but above all *Princes* in the World.

For what can ſet a ſtand to *that Power*, which can impoſe upon mens *Belief* without bounds? What can make ſuch an exorbitant Power *credible*, if the *Need* appear not as great as the *Abſurdity*? And what *colour* of ſuch *Need*, if the Bounds of Faith he not enlarged, beyond thoſe narrow ones which our Lord hath ſet? But when matters of Belief are ſo multiplied, that it is impoſſible for a man of ordinary buſineſs in the World, not only to underſtand them, but even to number them; when in moſt of them, ſometimes *Two*, ſometimes *More* Parties, contend with equal confidence, and can be brought to no other Agreement but in This, that they cannot be too zealous for the truth; What is *this* but a ſtate of *War* between the Diſputants, and of *Doubts* in the by-ſtanders? And how can Peace be obtained without a *living* Arbitrator?

Thus the diſputacity of Doctors made an Infallible Chair appear neceſſary, and thoſe who ſit in that Chair, have ſo far made it Infallible, as to determine what is moſt advantageous to *themſelves*; for they have thereby gained Honour and Power, Boundleſs as their matters of *Faith*, and Incredible as their *Myſteries*.

Their

Their (a) *Canon-Law* declareth and pretendeth to prove from *Gen.* 1. That the *Pope is as much greater than the Emperor, as the Sun is than the Moon*; and (b) *ſo much better than other Kings, as Gold is better than Lead.* This is *modeſt*, if their power in impoſing *Faith*, be more Arbitrary than that of Emperors and Kings in impoſing *Taxes.*

Their Supremacy over other Biſhops is Derived from the *ſame* fountain. The ſame unhappy Controverſy which made others *Diſputacious*, made the Biſhop of Rome *Supreme.* The gain that he made of the Entertainment, which he ſo often gave to *Athanaſius* and his Party, was *this:* He thence took advantage to claim a Negative in *Councils*, and afterward the Sole Power of Determining Controverſies *out of* Council. And how much he muſt be above the reſt of Mankind, who is ſo much above all other Biſhops, we may to our Admiration Compute by the next part of our Enquiry, *viz.* the Gain of the *Prieſts.*

I I. The PRIESTS have Exalted themſelves above the People, as much as the Pope above all Princes and Biſhops. That they might keep the Laity at the greater diſtance, they have doubly abuſed them; firſt by Multiplying and Entangling the Doctrines of Faith, and then by witholding the Light that ſhould clear them: At the ſame time *Surfeiting* them with a glut of Doctrines, and *Starving* them with a famin of the Bread of Life. So the Goſpel is to them both kinds of Wilderneſs; *Bare* as the ſands of *Africk* (without Path or Landmark) for want of Scripture; yet *thick-wooded* as the hills of *Zeilan* (whoſe buſhes none can creep through) by multitudes of Doctrines. So that thoſe whom Education hath enabled to underſtand the Language wherein the Scripture was written, find Scholaſtick Divinty ſo overgrown with briars, that they think it Better, (and are wil-

(a) *Greg de major. & obed. c. ſolitæ.* (b) *Diſtinct. 96. c. duo ſunt.*

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ling to believe thoſe who perſwade them ſo) to lie in Eaſe and Ignorance, taking Images for their Books, and Prieſts for their Oracles, than tire themſelves with ſuch Entangling Studies.

Yea, which is yet more intolerable, they keep the people ignorant, not only of God's word to *Them*, but of their Own to *God*, locking up their own publick Prayers in the ſame unknown Tongue with the Scriptures. *Ignorance* (ſay they) *is the Mother of Devotion:* it is ſo, but of Devotion toward the Prieſt, not toward God; for where there is no Light in the Underſtanding, what Heat can there be in the Affections? What Devotion without Love, and what Love without ſome Knowledge of the Object? St. *John* telleth us, *We love God becauſe he loved us firſt*, but then he ſuppoſeth we *know* it. St. *James* requireth, that *we pray in Faith*, but he ſuppoſeth, we *know* what we ask. But if I depend upon the Prieſt, both for God's word to Me, and Mine to God, what is he leſs than God's Oracle, and how much *more* than My Mediator? And upon either Office, the claim that he maketh to my greateſt Reverence, will then be as Juſt as it ſeems Inſolent; which that it do's, ſufficiently appears by theſe their Demands.

Staniſlaus Onicharius ſaith, that a *Common Prieſt is as much better than a King, as a Man is better than a Beaſt*; yea further, that *as far as God Almighty doth excel a Prieſt, ſo much doth a Prieſt excell a King.* (a)

Lay-men (ſaith Gaſp. Schioppius) *are Aſſes, Mules, or Horſes; the Romaniſt a Tame Aſs, the Heretick a Wild one.* (b) *Catholick Kings are the Leading-Aſſes with Bells*: Reges Catholici ſunt *Aſini* cum tintinnabulo.

Thank them heartily! We *Hereticks* are the wiſer, that keep our ſelves *Wild*, as they call it, that is, Free as Nature made us; not ſuffering our ſelves to be Saddled and Laden with Burdens,

(a) *Chimæra. fol.* 97. (b) *Eccleſiaſticus cap.* 147.

whereof we know nothing but the *heavineſs*; driven we know not whither, nor why, and laſhed by inſolent Maſters. Such uſage is enough to make thoſe turn Wild, whom Education hath Tamed.

We have a *Saying*, That *if the Horſe knew his own ſtrength, he would not Endure ſuch Uſuage:* But what hindereth *us* from knowing the ſtrength of our own Minds? We have the ſame *Scripture*, that our *Maſters* have, and the ſame *Faculties* by which to underſtand it; and we may have more Certainty of *our own* Sincerity than we can have of theirs: What hindereth us then from taking the *Bleſſed King's* Advice, *Not to take our Religion from other Men's Traditions, but from our own Judgments?*

If we can have the boldneſs to believe, That nothing can be matter of Saving Faith, but what the *Author* of our Faith made ſo; & that the *Scripture* hath faithfully informed us of what he ſaid in that great Point; we may ſoon know *our ſelves* to be no leſs, to all *deſirable* purpoſes, infallible, than the *Pope* pretendeth to be. And if we ſhake off the loads which our *Luſts* impoſe, as well as thoſe which the *School-men do*, we may enjoy that True Liberty, whereof our Redeemer ſaith, *If the Son make you Free, you ſhall be Free indeed.*

The

The CONCLUSION.

THE *End of* all *is to determin between* Faith *and* Charity, *as our* Lord *did between* God and Cæsar: Give unto Faith the things that are Faith's, and to Charity the things that are Charity's: *To Faith its due* Bounds, *and to Charity its due* Boundleſneſs; *to Faith the Praiſe of a good* Servant, *and to Charity the Honour of a good* Lord; *to Faith the Power to Advance Love, but not to Diminiſh it.*

That it is ſerviceable to Advance Love, we ſee by the Apoſtle's Argument, Eph. 4. 5. *where he Exhorteth to* keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, *upon this account*, There is One Lord, One Faith, &c. *That it may be abuſed to the Prejudice of Love, appeareth from the warning he gave to* Timothy, *to* Avoid Fooliſh and Unlearned Queſtions, knowing that they gender ſtrife: *And we ſhall know how to diſtinguiſh the* Queſtions *which we muſt* Avoid, *from the* Faith, *for which St.* Jude *Exhorteth us* earneſtly to Contend, *if we take a Survey of that Theological* Terra del Fuego, *whereof ſo much is ſpoken and ſo little known, but Smoak and Fire:* Smoak *from that multitude of Queſtions, which the* School-men *have raiſed from almoſt every clauſe of Scripture, thereby bringing Darkneſs out of Light*; *and* Fire *from that immoderate heat, wherewith ſome mens Zeal perſecuteth thoſe who differ from them in certain beloved Opinions, as if they* denied the Faith. *Where the Apoſtle Preſſeth*, to being of the ſame mind; *and* to ſpeaking the ſame things, &c. *He could have no other meaning than what is contained in his now mentioned Exhortation*, to the keeping of the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *For as ſameneſs of* Opinion, *in all points relating to Religion is* Unneceſſary, *ſo is it* impoſſible. *It is in the Power of any Diſputacious Perſon to Raiſe* Doubtfull Queſtions, *and ſuch as the Apoſtle Adviſeth to the* avoiding of, as knowing that they gender ſtrife;

or are naturally apt *ſo to do. But if Men will not* avoid ſuch Queſtions, *'tis not* impoſſible *to avoid the* ſtrife; *but difference in Opinion may be ſo Managed, as to be like* Deſcant upon the ſame Ground, *or* one Harmony in many different Notes. *Thoſe who would have us ſpeak the* ſame *things on doubtful Queſtions, would make the Church like* that *which* Geographers *call* The Country of Parrots.

The School-men *made it their* firſt *work, to reduce the Sayings of the* Fathers *to* Sentences; *and thoſe* Sentences *they Confirmed by ſeveral* Articles. *Their Determinations muſt be received with ſuch Profound Submiſſion, that it muſt be* Hereſy *to vary even from their* Words. *So that all* others *muſt be* Parrots *to* them, *as* they *were to the* Fathers. This *held, till ſome of Larger Spirits adventured to take notice of many* Groſs and Scandalous Impoſitions. *From* theſe *they Reformed; and the* reſt *were Reduced to* Syſtems, *which have been Received with ſuch Abſolute Belief, that to be* Heterodox *was e'ne as Criminal, as to be* Heretical; *and* ſo *we muſt be as much* Parrots *to the* Syſtematical Writers, *as* they *were to the* School-men. *Were this the* Worſt, *it might be the more Tolerable: For to talk after our* Teachers, *without underſtanding what we ſay, may not be ſo great a Miſchief as it is a Shame. A* Parrot, *tho he be good for* little, *is a* Harmleſs *Bird. But the miſery of it is, that thoſe who are* Parrots *to their Teachers, muſt needs be* Vultures *and* Birds of Prey *to* Others, *who cannot ſpeak as* they *do. They* firſt *Caſt off Humanity towards* themſelves, *and* then *towards* their Neighbours. *What is it* leſs *than Caſting off Humanity, when we* Un-man *our ſelves, by depoſing and laying aſide our* Reaſon? *And when we have thus dealt by* ourſelves, *what can Stop us from Endeavouring to do the ſame by* Others? To love our Neighbour as our ſelves, *is the* ſecond great Commandment; *and it looks like pure Love to* his Soul, *to ſeek to bring him into ſuch a Belief, as we have thought neceſſary for the Salvation of our* own *Souls.*

And the Remedy *requires the* ſame *Method. That Proverb,* Charity begins at Home, *muſt here be verified. For until we*

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allow our ſelves the free uſe of our Own *Faculties, as we ſhall believe without* Reaſon, *ſo ſhall we without* Meaſure; *both in Reſpect of the* Truth, *and the* Neceſſity *of Doctrines. But if we do our ſelves the juſt kindneſs, to uſe our* own *Eyes in Examining*, firſt *in General, why* Belief *it ſelf is Required; and then in Particular, what intereſt* this *or* that *Doctrine hath in that General End, which* all Belief *is to Serve; we ſhall* then *quickly and clearly diſcover, how* Weighty *the things are in which we* Agree, *and how* Light *thoſe wherein we* Differ: *And Conſequently how* great *are our Obligations to* Charity, *and how* ſlight *our Temptations to the* Contrary. *And every good Chriſtian will* then *find himſelf at liberty, to Enjoy that* Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding.

To theſe and Other good Ends, how ſerviceable the foregoing *Leaves may be, depends upon the Bleſſing of the God of* Love *and* Peace, *to whoſe* Grace *I Commend the* Reader.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAge 49. line 29. dele *Every*, p. 58. l. 12. put a *Comma* between *purchaſed*, and *to all of Mankind.* p. 63. l. 17. read *inſtance*; Pope *Leo.* p. 191. l. 18. for *be* r. *be*